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MANY MANSIONS

JOHN MACNEILL

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MANY MANSIONS

Sermons on the Future Life

BY
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To The Memory
Of Our Blessed Dead
In Token Of Our Tryst

"O the way sometimes is low,
  And the waters dark and deep,
And I stumble as I go.

But I have a tryst to keep;
  It was plighted long ago
With some who lie asleep.

And though days go dragging slow,
  And the sad hours gravewards creep,
And the world is hushed in woe,

I neither wail nor weep,
  For He would not have it so,
And I have a tryst to keep."

FOREWORD

The sermons contained in this volume constitute a series, delivered in the ordinary course of my ministry, on successive Sunday evenings during the first three months of the present year. They were prepared from week to week amid the pressing duties of a heavy pastorate. Retaining as they do the form of direct, spoken messages, whatever appeal they carry is quite apart from any literary excellence for which they make no claim. The preacher's aim, in their delivery, was rather to bring the mighty sanctions of the unseen world to bear upon the minds and hearts of his hearers. That this aim was achieved, he had abundant proof in that the Holy Spirit blessed these sermons in the conversion of men and women, and in the comforting of many sorrowing and uncertain souls. If similar blessing shall come to his readers through this printed page, he will be well content, though no one more clearly recognizes how many questions have been left unanswered.

It was fitting that the series should culminate on Easter Sunday with the message of Christ's resurrection, and though the resurrection of Jesus is not an event of the future, it may justly be included in this discussion since His empty grave is the chief pledge of all our future hope. Wide reading over many years on the subject of the future life has made me debtor to more minds than one is consciously aware. To the obligations of which I am aware, and which herein are recognized, let me add my grateful acknowledgment of those of which, like every other preacher, I am unaware. To the known and to the unknown my thanks alike are due.

Let me add that this volume would never have taken form but for the urgent demands of my people at Walmer Road who desired, first of all, to repeat these messages to a wider congregation and, in the second place, to commemorate in this way the twenty happy and abundant years we have had together in the fellowship of the gospel.

JOHN MacNEILL.

CONTENTS

I

PAGE

Is There a Future Life? 15

“If a man die shall he live again?”—Job 14:14
“Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel”—2 Timothy 1:10

II

What Is Death? 33

“And spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem”—Luke 9:31

III

“Where Are the Dead?” 49

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise”—Luke 23:43
“That they without us should not be made perfect”—Heb. 11:40

IV

Does Personal Identity Continue? 69

“And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.”—Matt. 17:3

V

Do the Dead Serve Us? 87

“But ye are come unto Mount Sion and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to

PAGE

an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."—Heb. 12:22-23

VI

WILL CHRIST RETURN? 105

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."—Acts 1:11

VII

WITH WHAT BODY DO THEY COME? 121

"But some man will say: How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?—1 Cor. 15:35

VIII

IS THERE A RECKONING? 139

"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."—Matthew 25:31-32

IX

IS THERE A SECOND CHANCE? 157

"Then said one unto Him, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?'"—Luke 13:23

X

WHAT IS THE FINAL ISSUE OF EVIL? 173

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."—Matt. 25:46

XI

PAGE

What and Where Is Heaven? 193

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."—Rev. 21:2

XII

Why Seek Ye the Living Among the Dead? . 209

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures."—1 Cor. 15:3-4

I

IS THERE A FUTURE LIFE?

"Personality is not the largest but it is the highest fact in the known cosmos; and if death has power over it, there is nothing which death spares; it can undo the utmost which the divine will has wrought."

—MARTINEAU.

"The day in which the belief in an after-life shall vanish from the earth will witness a terrific moral and spiritual decadence. There is no lever capable of raising an entire people if once they have lost their faith in the immortality of the soul."

—RENAN.

"Hence in a season of calm weather
  Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
  Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

—WORDSWORTH.

MANY MANSIONS

I

IS THERE A FUTURE LIFE?

Text: *"If a man die shall he live again?"*—Job 14:14.
"Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."—2 Timothy 1:10.

The story is told that in the early centuries of the Christian era, when the Gospel was first carried into Britain by the messengers of the Cross, a striking incident took place at the court of Edwin, the King of Northumbria. The great, wattled hall was lighted up with torches, and a crowd of eager listeners gathered round to hear what the teachers of the new religion had to say. Presently a grim and bearded old earl rose up in his place and said: "Can the new religion tell us what lies beyond death? Man, said he, is like a swallow flying through this lighted hall. The bird enters at one door from the darkness outside, passes through the light and warmth of the room, and disappears through the farther door into the darkness again. So is man. He comes out of the mystery of eternity, passes through the light of this world for a moment and disappears into the mystery of the eternity beyond. Does the new religion tell us what lies beyond death?" The question of that grim, old earl is the question which has shaped itself in the minds of men from the beginning, whether ancient or modern, young or old, savage or civilized. It was the question of Job. It is the question of our hearts. If a man die shall he live again? Is there a life after death? Do we perish like the beasts, or does life persist somewhere in a great Beyond? If a man die is he still alive?

No apology need be offered for introducing that question to a modern congregation. The future life is a subject of perennial interest to men. Fifty to seventy-five years ago, the hope of immortality held a large place in literature, poetry and preaching, and rightly so, for the mightiest sanctions of our life come to us out of the unseen. It was one of the commanding themes of the pulpit. Those were the days when Wordsworth wrote his "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," Tennyson his "In Memoriam," and when Browning made his daring ventures into the realm of the unseen. But in the sharp scientific and materialistic atmosphere of the past generation, the emphasis shifted from the next world to this. The note of immortality largely vanished from our literature; it was almost silenced in our poetry; worst of all, it was absent too often from our preaching and we tried to find the supreme sanctions of life in time rather than in eternity. But the emphasis has shifted back again. It is needless to recount the reasons for that reviving interest. Doubtless it is due in part to the natural reaction that always follows the over-emphasis of one side of truth. Doubtless it is due in larger part to the tragic days of the war when myriads of our "matchless dead" vanished into the mystery of the last great Adventure followed by the yearning, wistful hearts of those who fain would know what secret they have found. One thing is certain: whatever be its explanation, there has settled down on our modern mind a deeper conviction that the surest realities are the hidden ones, that there is a great life there into which we are hastening, that men are citizens of another world because God hath set eternity in their heart.

Now I am not going to use it as an argument, but rather as a starting point, that deep in the hearts of all men there is an instinct which can never be eradicated that death is not the end of all. The black barbarian has it; to the ancient Greek, it was Elysium; to the oriental mind, it is Nirvana; to the red Indian, the Happy Hunting Ground;

> "It must be so! Plato, thou reasonest well,
> Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire
> This longing after Immortality?
> Or whence this secret dread and inward horror
> Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
> Back on herself and startles at destruction?
> 'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us;
> 'Tis Heaven itself that points out an Hereafter,
> And intimates Eternity to man."

I say we shall not use that as an argument, but here is an instinct which cannot be ignored. Is that instinct true? Is it only a false impulse? Or does it point with certainty to another life for man? On those questions, there are three verdicts to be heard, one from science, one from philosophy, and one from religion—and without a moment's delay, let them be given. These are the verdicts as they are frequently summarized: that the idea of immortality is permitted by science, it is demanded by philosophy, it is confirmed by religion. Science says, "There may be a future life; I know of nothing which forbids it." Philosophy says, "There ought to be a future life; everything I know of demands it." Religion says, "There is a future life and I have the proof and the revelation of it in the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The Verdict of Science

Now there are some of you who would not care a snap of your finger whether science permitted this or not; you would have it at any cost. And you are fortunate or unfortunate (I know not which) in your unquestioning faith. But there are others whose minds are not built in that way. They must be sure of every step. They must be certain that there is no valid objection to their belief from the standpoint of science, or from the constitution of the universe so far as it is known. And while we do not admit, even to that man, that he can find out everything, or even the deepest things with his scientific test, we are glad to assure him that the most authoritative voices in the world of science have declared and are declaring that not only is a future life possible, but that there is every probability of a survival after death. Surely it is significant that there is not one scientist of any standing today who will positively deny the possibility of a future life, while men like the late Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge assert that not only is there no insurmountable barrier to the doctrine, but they declare their firm belief in a future life.

Nor does the testimony of science rest there. By analogy, science furnishes a further line of evidence. Two doctrines have long been accepted in the world of science, viz.: the indestructibility of matter and the conservation of energy. Matter is indestructible. It may change its form but it is not destroyed. A body may be blown to atoms but it does not disappear. A tree may fall and decay into rich brown soil but its material does not perish. Over matter there may pass innumerable changes, but the substance of the universe is neither increased nor diminished as the centuries go by. Likewise, energy is forever conserved. The form of energy may pass from heat to light, from light to motion, from motion to electricity, but the energy is not lost. Somewhere in the vast reservoir of force it is conserved. Is it likely, then, that while the senseless atoms of matter endure, the alert and living soul of man should perish? Is it likely that while the energy stored in the waves of light and heat continues undiminished, the mighty energies within a conscious personality shall spend themselves and die?

The chief objection raised by science to a future life has come from one direction. The materialistic scientist contends that life is only a function of the brain; that when the brain is dissolved at death, everything perishes; that you kill all that is spiritual and unseen when you kill all that is material in man. And that would be true if it could be proved that the brain is the source of life—the fountain of the mind. But no one can be sure of that. We know there is some relation between the brain and thought, but no one can define it. The scientist has not the slightest inkling of the way in which the brain is connected with the mind. Unless he can show that the brain is the source of life and the fountain of the mind, then his whole veto on immortality falls to the ground. Moreover, if the scientist asserts that the "I," the "soul," the "personality" in me is identical with my brain matter, I will ask him which brain he means. For this very scientist tells us that the body changes every seven years in every particle. Consequently, an old man of eighty has had ten or twelve different brains which have succeeded one another, and yet the "I," the "soul" has not been dissolved; not only so, but it has maintained its identity throughout. No! there is no veto from science against a future life. The scientist may not accept the doctrine, but he cannot forbid it; for even through science the doorway is left open and through that doorway we may enter in and believe.

THE VERDICT OF PHILOSOPHY

We pass on, in the second place, to hear the verdict of philosophy upon the idea of a future life. I would rather not use such a pretentious word as the word "philosophy" but it is the only word I know of that stands for something which we all recognize and practice, though we may not call it by that name. And when we look at life from the philosophic point of view, what do we find? We find ourselves above the level of the beast. We find ourselves with a different kind of being. We have a conscious reason which the beast has not. We have a moral conscience which the beasts have not. So far as the brute is concerned, his life is full here. It demands nothing beyond. He escapes the higher obligations but he escapes also the highest joys.

> "I envy not the beast that takes
> His license in the field of time,
> Unfettered by the sense of crime,
> To whom a conscience never wakes."

But that kind of life is not the life of man. His life is bigger than that of the brute, so much bigger that it cannot fulfil itself within the limits of time and space. His conscious reason feels itself a part of something more than is found in this world. His conscience finds itself answer to something more than is crowned in this life. There is in us a sense of obligation, and, if we are not immortal, we are called upon to live as though we were. There is in us a sense of justice which demands a time and place to strike life's balance in an equitable way. There is in us a sense of incompleteness which calls for another stage to make it all complete. We find ourselves following aims and ideals—and bound to follow them—which are quite beyond our reach within this finite life. We find ourselves bound up in categories of thought and conduct which have their sources far beyond this life of sense and their satisfaction beyond this span of time. As Robert Louis Stevenson once said: "We would need to invent a heaven if one had not been revealed, for there is so much that falls out so bitterly ill this side of time."

Thus the whole philosophy of life demands a future and the deepest thing in man rises up to say, "If there is not future life, there ought to be."

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly longed for death.
This life whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh, life, not death, for which we pant,
More life and fuller that we want."

THE VERDICT OF REVELATION

And now we advance to the third stage of our argument. The future life, permitted by science and demanded by philosophy, is confirmed and uncovered by revelation. I do not know whether you caught the wonderful meaning of my second text; "Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." He brought life and immortality to light. He brought them out into the open where all men could see them. Up till His day immortality was hidden and obscure. The old philosophers groped in the dark for the assurance of it but were never certain. Even in the Old Testament there is a very dim and faltering knowledge of the future life. But when Jesus came, that uncertainty vanished. He brought both life and immortality out into the clear light of revelation where all men might see their reality.

For one thing, Jesus, in all His teaching, addressed men as immortal beings. They did not belong to the dust. They were not meant for time alone. This life was only a part—a smaller and preparatory part—of a larger life beyond. It was the kindergarten stage, preparatory to the higher stages of their spiritual education. It was not alone in His teaching but in His living that Jesus bore His witness to the reality of a future life. He lived His own life as though there were a future life for Him. He had His eye upon the future. He let worldly wealth go, and power and fame and impunity go, for the sake of another life which He thought it worth His while to gain. And it was not alone by His teaching, nor yet alone by His living that Jesus brought the future life into the open. He actually unveiled it unto men. He went into that other world and came back again to report what He had found. Hamlet, in his soliloquy speaks of "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns." And that is true. None of our dear, dead travellers come back that we might meet them face to face. They are swallowed up in silence. Even Lazarus, called back by Jesus from that spirit world, reported nothing of which we have the record.

"Where wert thou, brother, those four days?
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unrevealed;
He told it not; or something sealed
The lips of that Evangelist."

"From which no traveller returns." But there is one great exception. There was one Traveller who went into that "undiscovered country," explored its farthest limits, and came back to tell us what He found there. And this is the word He brought about that other life: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." "If it were not so I would have told you." Is there anything in which He has ever deceived men? Is there any fog into which He has suffered us to grope? It is impossible that He should deceive us and feed our faith with falsehood. And when I find that the very constitution of the universe implies it, and the nature of my own being demands it, and the authority of Christ and His revelation confirms it, I for one am prepared to accept that part of the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

Here then, we rest our argument for the future life. We have attempted no description of it—that belongs to the sermons which are to follow. But no one can leave this great truth as a cold argument upon his lips. If the argument be sound and the truth established, what does it mean to us? What is the word that comes to us out of the unseen? This, first of all, that life here and there is all one piece. For what does living mean? It is not a threescore years and ten. It is living and dying and living again. There may be a little interruption at the point that we call death, but life is all one piece. It is in the making now. Here we are getting together the warp and the woof, and whatever we weave will be part of the web yonder. Will it be dark with unbelief, knotted with rebellion and rotted with sin, or will it be bright and radiant as a cloth of gold with the purity and power of Christ? We will live and not die, but of what is this the beginning? Prof. W. N. Clarke passed away a few years ago, rich in the virtues of Christ, gentle and strong and kind. And when someone suggested that his life was near its close and youth and vigor gone, he wrote these words in reply:

"Gone, they tell me is youth,
Gone the strength of my life,
Nothing remains but decline,
Nothing but age and decay.

Not so! I am God's little child,
Only beginning to live.
Coming the days of my prime,
Coming the strength of my life,
Coming the vision of God,
Coming my bloom and my power!"

Thus, also, I learn that I can only venture through my life here as my hand is placed in the hand of Christ. I put it that way with a purpose. It is often said that we cannot venture into the life yonder without Him. But that is not the way He put it, and it is not the way I choose to put it this evening. If we have Him in this life, we will have Him in all life. If we miss Him in this life, we will miss Him in all life, for life is all one piece. Then let our hearts be open to the eternal Saviour and we shall hear His assuring voice which says: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

II

WHAT IS DEATH?

"Carry me over the long, last mile,
Man of Nazareth, Christ for me!
Weary I wait by Death's dark stile,
In the wild and the waste where the wind blows free:
And the shadows and sorrows, come out of my past,
Look keen through my heart,
And will not depart,
Now that my poor world has come to its last.

Lord, is it long that my spirit must wait,
Man of Nazareth, Christ for me!
Deep is the stream, and the night is late,
And grief blinds my soul that I cannot see . . .
Speak to me out of the silences, Lord,
That my spirit may know,
As forward I go,
That Thy pierced hands are lifting me over the ford!

—L. MACLEAN WATT.

II

WHAT IS DEATH?

TEXT: *"And spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."*—Luke 9:31.

No traveller to Florence has ever failed to visit the beautiful Baptistery of St. John which stands beside the great Cathedral in the central square. But before he enters the building to feast his eyes upon its wonders, he is confronted by those wonderful gates of bronze which have been the pride and the glory of Florence since the middle of the fifteenth century. They are the work of Lorenzo Ghiberti. For ten years he labored on them, pouring out in design and execution the wealth and the skill of his artistic soul. We do not know what imperfect designs first floated in his mind, nor what dark and forbidding material first came to his hand, nor what labors he bore. All we know is that when he had finished his work, he left those gates so perfect that Michael Angelo declared they were "worthy to become the gates of Paradise itself."

And we have gathered here on these Sunday evenings to look in upon the glories of the future life, but right upon its threshold stand the gates of death, through which we every one must pass. For death is the doorway to the other world. All that we know of death, we know with absolute certainty. All that we do not know, we cannot even guess. Three simple facts we know of death. First, we know that death is real. We may deny the reality of sin and disease and pain, but when you deny the reality of death, he will one day send his answer in his cold and clammy touch upon your brow. Second, we know that death is certain. It is the lot of all mankind. It is inevitable. Certain things may be done by proxy, but for physical death we can find no substitute. You cannot evade death. Thus far, every man and woman, saint and sinner, has passed through the portals of the tomb. "Life in some respects," says one, "is like a game of chess. During the progress of the game, the pieces on the board occupy different positions and possess different values. But when the game is over, all alike—bishops, kings, knights and pawns,—go into the common box. So, in life here below, one man is a king, another a knight, another a bishop, another a governor, another a master in business, another a mere pawn. But when death comes—the great leveller—all men are equal in the solemn stillness of the tomb." Third, we know that death is uncertain. No man knows the day nor the hour of its coming. It is true that it serves notice sometimes in sickness or in senile decay; often it comes when it is least expected. But however and whenever it may come, it is the one experience which is the common lot of man. "Set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live."

For most of us there is a revulsion, if not a sense of terror, at the thought of death. The hands of many a human artist have worked upon those gates but have never made them beautiful. Some thought it might be done by familiarity, and so the old Egyptians set a grinning skeleton in the chief place at every feasting table, but even familiarity could not breed contempt. A profligate, old king of

France attempted the opposite and forbade anyone to mention death in his presence, but even silence cannot banish fear. The ancient Stoics faced the gates with grim determination but with no confidence and hope. The poet's fancy wove the flowers around the grinning skull, and yet behind the blossoms the grim form appeared. He was still the "hooded horror" that awaited every man at some unexpected turning of the road. And it was not until there came the one great Artist of that life and this that death was changed. To use the word of Paul: "Jesus Christ hath abolished death." We do not know what designs first floated in His mind, nor what dark and forbidding material came to His hand, nor how grim and terrible His labors, "nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through." All we know is this, that when He had finished His redemptive work, He had robbed death of all its terror and left those gateways as the very gates of Paradise to all who will believe.

Now what is death? What did Jesus say about death? We know it is a biological necessity. It is a social necessity else this little planet had long ago been overcrowded. But what is it? In that conversation which they held that day on the mountain,—Moses, Elijah and Jesus—about death, what did they say? Were there any great words that Jesus left behind to tell us what it is to die? I think there were—three of them especially, and we find them on the lips of Christ and Paul and Peter and John and all the saints throughout the years.

FALLING ASLEEP

The first great New Testament word for death is "sleep." Perhaps I ought to say that it is an Old Testament word with the New Testament meaning. For Job says, "Now I shall sleep in the dust." David "fell asleep and was gathered unto his fathers." In the New Testament it has a wider and deeper significance. Stephen prayed for his murderers and "fell asleep." Paul says, "We shall not all sleep." "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," says Jesus, "I go that I may awake him out of sleep." When He stood by the bed of the little daughter of Jairus, He said literally, "My little lambie arise"—as though He waked her out of sleep. That is the central word about death that stands out on the pages of the New Testament. And here I ought to say that even in that term there is no room for that false doctrine, preached in some quarters, that the soul sleeps in death and passes into unconsciousness forever, or even for a time. There is far too much in the teachings of Jesus elsewhere which forbids any such notion and in which He represents the soul as passing instantly at death into a conscious life beyond. It is but a figure of speech, but what does He mean by the figure? I think He is trying to present to us a comforting idea that is always dear to the hearts of weary men: that death may bring them, if they will, the supreme rest of soul. It is in our sleep we enter our deepest and purest rest for the body, and it is in our death we may enter the purest and deepest rest for the soul.

You remember the requiem of Robert Louis Stevenson:

"Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longs to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

That came out of the very soul of Stevenson. His body was wracked with pain. His whole spirit was burdened with suffering and weary with its load. Death was welcome as it came with the prospect of supreme and perfect rest. Paul had the same comforting hope for himself. He had a weary life. His body was tortured with pain; he bore in his flesh the dying of the Lord Jesus. His days were crowded with labors; his nights, with supplications and prayer. He longed for rest—the unbroken rest of eternity—not a rest of idleness, but the rest of harmonious action in the freedom and buoyancy of the life that is to come. And I ask you as you see your loved one fighting the long, last, hopeless fight—never free from pain, through the long night wishing it were day, through the long day wishing it were night, the strength growing weaker, the mind growing feebler, the eyes growing dimmer—I ask you if there is not something wonderfully comforting and inviting in this idea that death is the sublime and perfect rest—"the rest that remains for the people of God."

> "I pray Thee, Saviour, keep
> Me in thy love,
> Until death's holy sleep
> Shall me remove
> To that fair realm where, sin and sorrow o'er,
> Thou and thine own are one for evermore."

A Sacrifice

The second New Testament idea of death is that it is the Christian's last and noblest act of sacrifice to God. This was a conception that was strong in the mind of Jesus. Death was the crowning act of sacrifice for Him, "who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God." When Paul was nearing the end, he said, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." There was a time when the old Jewish worshipper used to pour out his drink offering at the altar of Jehovah. So the apostle thought that some day he would take up his life and, like a drink offering, he would spill it out at the feet of God as his last great act of devotion. You see Paul's life was one of constant sacrifice. He gave up everything for the Gospel. He had one sublime offering still to make; he had to empty the cup of his life at the feet of Jesus and he hailed the hour of his death that would give him the opportunity of doing that. It is so with every true child of God. Life is made up of countless sacrifices. To God we render up our time, our money, our thought, our energy, our gifts. The time comes when we may render up our very life itself, and that is done in death. That is the crowning sacrifice of all. You call it a noble, religious act for a man to come forward and lay a fortune on the altar of the Lord, and so it is. You deem it a costly sacrifice for a young man or woman to lay youth with all its promise upon the altar of foreign mission service, and so it is. But all these are nothing compared with the last great sacrifice of all, when we pour out our very life itself, and if we die as God intended us to die, death may be the most princely and noble sacrifice we have ever made to Him.

It was thought by some that only at the stake or on the scaffold could death become a holy sacrifice. It was the deep regret of

Samuel Rutherford, the Scottish saint, that he was not allowed to die on the scaffold. When the officers of the law came to take him before the council and to death, they found him dying. "It was my wish," he said, "to have glorified God upon the scaffold and I would willingly go with you but I have received a summons to go where few kings or lords shall come." But his surrender of himself was a holy sacrifice.

Life is made up of great and solemn acts to God; the last and most solemn act of life is to die, and if we render up our life gladly and willingly at His call, death will become a glorious act of homage and obedience—the climax of communion between the soul and God.

"O love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be."

Going to the Father

The third New Testament idea of death represents it as the homecoming of the soul. If you go back into the mind of Jesus, you will find that this conception was the most frequent of them all. Do you know how He always spoke of His death? He called it, "going to the Father." "I am going to my Father." He was away from home in this world. He had been with the Father from the beginning. He had lived beneath the splendour of the eternal throne. He had gone in and out in the freedom of the Father's house. The angels were His servants, the archangels His messengers. When He came to this world, He came to a foreign land, and He looked forward to the day when He would get home. Death was His return home. The same idea is borne out by the word that is used in our text. "They spake of the decease." The Greek word is exodon—the exodus. It was a going out. You know what "the Exodus" was with the children of Israel. It was their going out from Egypt and the second book of the Bible is called the Book of Exodus because it tells of their going out of the land of bondage into the promised land. So it is with death. It is our Exodus—going from the foes to the friends, from the land of bondage to the land of the free, from the chains of the slave to the freedom of home. It is getting home; "I am going to my Father."

And then, too, see how that idea of the homecoming swept the mind of Paul. Death would bring him home to Christ. He had "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." "We have a building of God, an house not made with hands." Paul longed for home, for his Friend. He had never seen the face of his Friend. On the Damascus road he had heard His voice, had seen a vision, had been caught up into the third heaven. But he had never seen Him face to face. Death was the chariot to carry him home. And just as one of you, at the doorway of a public hall at the close of a concert, would call a carriage from the darkness of the street and stepping in, give your orders to the driver in one brief word: "Home,"—so did Paul step gladly into the sombre chariot of death, speak to his sable driver in one swift word: "Home!" "Home!" and he cared not how fast the steeds might gallop, for every moment brought him nearer to the light of the Father's fireside, nearer the faces at the window which he had loved long since and lost awhile.

Thus has Christ changed the whole aspect of death. On this side, it is dark; that, bright. This side a departure; that, an arrival. This side, a going out; that side, a coming in. Here it is a hooded horror; there, an angel of light; here, a separation; there, a reunion; here, a graveway; there, a gateway; here, a good-bye; there, a good-morning.

> "Life, we have been long together,
> Through pleasant and through cloudy weather,
> 'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,
> Perhaps it will cost a sigh, a tear.
> Then steal away, give little warning,
> Choose thine own time!
> Say not, 'Good-night,' but in some brighter clime,
> Bid me, 'Good morning.'"

Who was it that gave us the right to say that? It was Jesus. Yes, and no one has the right to say that confidently outside of Christ. For all I have said to-night is the portion of those who are His own. Outside of Jesus, it is null and void. It is all a reversal. If you are not His, death for you can never mean rest but a greater unrest. If you are not His, death cannot mean an offering, for every offering must be sanctified by the touch of Christ. If you are not His, death can never mean a homecoming, but a land that is more alien and foreign still, into the outer darkness, where the lights are all quenched, and the faces all around you are the faces of the foe. Death in itself has no magic to change us. It is this life that determines that. Let us order our life in view of the inevitable future. To use the words of Bourdaloue, "Lift from death the power to betray you." Put your trust in Him! Yield yourselves to Him! So that when you answer the last summons, it may be with all the gladness of those who turn their faces Home. "To die is gain," only when it has been Christ for a man to live!

III

“WHERE ARE THE DEAD?”

"Oh strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force
Surely has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm."

—MATTHEW ARNOLD
(On the death of his father)

"Greatheart and Faithful gone before,
Brave Christiana, Mercy sweet;
Are shining ones who stand and wait
The weary wanderer to greet.
Patience and Love his handmaids are,
And, till by the clear call released,
Christian may rest in that bright room
Whose windows open to the East."

III

"WHERE ARE THE DEAD?"

TEXT: *"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."*—Luke 23:43.

"That they without us should not be made perfect."—Heb. 11:40.

The famous Canon Liddon in one of his sermons tells a striking story of an old military officer who had returned from India. He was describing to a group of friends the events connected with the Indian mutiny. As he reviewed the thrilling experiences of his life his audience hung in breathless interest on his vivid words. At last he paused, and as they expressed their wonder, he quietly remarked: "But I expect some day to see something more wonderful than that." His friends were surprised. He was an old man—over seventy. He would scarcely travel any more. He was retired from the army. Something more wonderful than that! Where? When?

they asked him; and he paused a moment again before he said in a quiet voice, "I mean in the first five minutes after death." The first five minutes after death! What would he see? Where would he be? What will the first five minutes bring?

The idea is current in many minds that the dead pass at once from this world to their final rewards of good or evil, and we often say about our sainted dead that they close their eyes on earth to open them in heaven. But with all due deference to that popular sentiment, let me frankly say that I do not think the Bible will furnish ground for such a thought as that. For the Bible always represents these final states of good and evil as lying beyond the resurrection and the judgment, and so far as we are aware the general resurrection and the general judgment have not yet occurred. And if the dead have not yet been raised, if the throne of judgment has not yet been set, if heaven and hell be beyond these, where, in the meantime, are the dead? Where do they pass the time from death until resurrection? Where are Abraham and Paul and John and the millions of the dead who have not yet entered into heaven but wait for the sounding trumpet of the resurrection morn? Where are they five minutes after death? To my mind, there is one clear answer from the Scriptures. They are in the intermediate state; they are in the waiting place of the dead; and when the end of all things shall come and the resurrection morn shall break, when the earth and the sea shall give up their dead, then shall the throne be set and the final judgment of God be uttered in every human life.

It will help us to get this whole picture clearly in our minds if we remember that the Bible speaks of three stages of existence in the progress of a human soul. Of course, the poets and philosophers suggest that we lived in some other world before we came to this but on that question the Bible sheds no light. But it does speak of three stages through which we pass on this eternal pilgrimage begun. The first stage is the earthly life, where this mysterious "I" lives with a body woven round it, a body that is subject to suffering and decay. It is a stage of great importance. If we take the words of Jesus, that stage appears to shape all future stages. It is the probation time. It is the formative period when deeds and thoughts pass into habits, when habits make character, when character makes destiny and when destiny sets into the eternity beyond. And that first stage begins at birth and ends at death. In that stage there are the fourteen hundred millions now upon the earth. The second stage of existence revealed in the Bible is the intermediate life. There the soul exists without a body. It is our disembodied state. It is the waiting place of the dead. It is often called "the near hereafter." In the language of our Lord's day, it was known as "hades," which is not the same as "hell" and should not be translated thus. The special part of "hades" where the righteous dwell was known as "paradise" which is not the same as "heaven" and should not be translated by that word. That second stage opens with death and closes with the resurrection, and in that stage are the countless millions of the dead. The third stage of being revealed in the Bible is heaven and hell. That stage is known as "the far hereafter." It is the final state. It is the end of the age, as Jesus says. There the soul is joined to the body that rises in the resurrection and enters on its final state of good or evil. That third great stage opens with the resurrection and closes with the unknown eternity of God. First, this earthly life with an earthly body; second, the waiting life without a body; third, the final life with the body of the resurrection.

It is about that second stage I am to speak to-night.

THE SCRIPTURE TEACHING REGARDING THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

We ought to remember that when Jesus came to earth, He already found among the Jews a strong belief in the intermediate life. In their Hebrew language they had one broad word that described the unseen world—the word "Sheol" and the Psalmist said; "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol." It was the same in their Greek language; they had one broad word to cover the whole unseen world, both good and evil. They called it "hades." But while they did not name the abode of the wicked in "hades," they did name the special abode of the righteous. They called it "paradise." Paradise was a part of "hades." Sometimes they called it "Abraham's bosom," sometimes "the Garden of Eden," sometimes "beneath the Throne." Thus Jesus takes up their great and solemn words and uses them in His own revelation and for the most part gives them His sanction regarding the life that lies beyond.

What is that intermediate state? I know of no better way to illustrate it than to review the story of our Lord's experience. Where did Jesus go when he died upon the cross? Did He go to heaven? No! Where then? He Himself tells us. He went to paradise. "To-day," He said to the dying man at his side, "thou shalt be with me in paradise." Jesus left his body on the cross and went as a disembodied spirit into the waiting place of the dead. During those three days, while His body slept in the grave, the spirit of Jesus ranged that waiting world. And after He had spent three days in that intermediate life, His spirit joined His body that was raised again from the dead. The first two stages of His pilgrimage were ended and He was now ready to enter on the third. It was then and not till then He ascended into heaven. He told Mary plainly after He had risen from the dead, "I am not yet ascended unto my Father." But when He had revealed Himself to His disciples He was taken into heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

And now you will see how the other great Scriptures yield up their meaning in the light of His own experience. Take the story of Dives and Lazarus. It is not a picture of heaven and hell. It is a picture of the intermediate state. Dives lifted up his eyes in hades (not hell), being in torment, but Lazarus at his death was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. This also in Christ's promise to the dying thief: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"—not heaven, but paradise. Thus also our Lord's words to Nicodemus become clear: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who was in heaven." That is the world that Jesus refers to in the first chapter of Revelation when He says: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death." That is the world He refers to in the twentieth chapter of Revelation when He says that in the resurrection day, "death and hades shall give up their dead." It is that world He means when He says in the fourteenth of John: "In my Father's house are many mansions (abiding places): if it were not so, I would have told you." And if you want to read a passage where all three stages of existence pass in review at once, read that passage in the fifth chapter of Second Corinthians where Paul says: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. . . . Therefore we are always confident knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: . . . and we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." There you have it all. "The earthly house of this tabernacle" —that is our earthly life. Then beyond the resurrection the heavenly life with the glorified body, "the house not made with hands"; and lying in between the two, the disembodied state where the soul is "unclothed" or "naked," as Paul says. And somehow in these words of Paul you can detect a shrinking from that "naked" state. He rejoices that the body of glory will be prepared for him in due time but he hopes he may not have to wait too long within the intermediate life. He has no fear that in that life he will be separated from Christ. No! no! If he is absent from the body he is present with the Lord. But he makes us feel that he would be glad to pass quickly through the second stage into the third and last stage with no waiting between—or to put it in his own way—"that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

The Facts That Follow

And now if I have made clear from the Bible this intermediate state—this waiting life—I pass on to make these three remarks about its character and purpose.

And first of all, it is clear that in the intermediate state the *moral distinctions are clearly defined* and we begin to gather the moral harvests of our earthly life. So far as the unrighteous dead are concerned, it is clear that in that life they begin to reap the harvest of their sin. It is for them a time of conscious suffering and distress, and all the more so because it is not physical but mental and spiritual. When I read that Dives lifted up his eyes in hades, being in torment, and longed for a drop of water to cool the tip of his tongue, I may be dealing with figure, or a parable, or what you like, but it is a figure that Jesus used to represent a great spiritual reality, and you can feel through it the mental anguish and remorse of the man who had lived for the indulgence of his baser self in this life. And when I read about the unrighteous that they are kept under punishment unto the day of judgment, and when I read that the angels sinned and were not spared but cast down into hades to be reserved unto judgment, I do not think I am reading the bogey-tale of some disordered mind, for I recognize that these words represent, and truly represent, some stern and solemn features which mark the life of sin even here upon the earth. I will deal with this question in a later sermon on future punishment, but let me say in passing that because our moral life is what it is, because its laws are what they are, these results are not forced upon us by an arbitrary God; they are the outworking of a moral law which God even cannot evade because He is what He is: that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

The same thing is seen in the life of the righteous in the intermediate state. There the moral distinctions hold and the moral harvests come. In that waiting life it is for them a time of conscious bliss. They are "with Christ which is far better." They are "absent from the body and present with the Lord." They "rest from their labours and their works do follow them." They are "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." They are with "the spirits of just men." They are free from the limitations of the body; they dwell in the presence of Him whom having not seen in this earthly life they loved and even though they did not see Him they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. It cannot be too strongly stated that they enter at death into unclouded bliss in the presence of Jesus, even though the final heaven has not been reached.

> "O change, stupendous change,
> There lies the soulless clod.
> The light eternal breaks,
> The new immortal wakes,
> Wakes with his God."

In the second place, it is clear that the intermediate state *is not a place of purgatory* in which the righteous soul makes expiation for its sin, and by its purgatorial suffering escapes its bonds of guilt. This, as you know is the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church. According to the statement of one of their own writers "all who die at peace with the church (that is the Roman Catholic church) but are not perfect pass into purgatory." Here, according to the Romanist, they make satisfaction for the sins committed after baptism by suffering for a longer or shorter time according to the degree of their guilt. And the Romanist further declares that the church on earth has power by her prayers and by the sacrifice of the mass to shorten or lengthen these sufferings or to remit them and forgive them altogether. It ought to be remembered that the doctrine of purgatory as taught by the Roman Catholic church does not imply a "second chance" to those who refused the offer of Christ here. For "mortal sin" Rome holds out no hope in the world that is to come. Neither will the fires of purgatory avail anything for the Protestant believer but only for the true child of the Roman church who has died at peace with his church but has not yet been made perfect.

Now to my mind there is not the slightest foundation in the New Testament for any such doctrine, and we search the teaching of Jesus and of the apostles in vain for such a conception of the intermediate state. There is suffering in that state, but it is not borne by the righteous. Their state is one of conscious bliss and joy. And even the suffering borne by the wicked is not represented as purifying and atoning though it must have some hidden purpose in the wisdom of God. Neither is there any Scripture for believing that the church has power to shorten or to lengthen the purgatorial suffering if it did exist, or to remit it or forgive it. Only God can forgive sin. It is the business of the church to announce that, to preach it, to persuade men to accept it, but never to arrogate to herself to grant the divine forgiveness either in this life or in the next. The divine forgiveness can only be granted by the divine heart itself. And besides all this, any idea of purgatorial suffering by the righteous is inconsistent with the finished work of Christ. "But now once in the end of the age hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

"Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood:
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!"

There is nobody who can add to that or needs to. It is complete. No, the true purgatorial suffering is in this world, for only here are sins purged away by the sanctifying spirit of God.

But even though there is no purgatorial suffering for the righteous, it is reasonable to suppose that the saints of God in that waiting life grow in knowledge and develop in character, and are changed from glory into glory. It is so in our life on earth. I believe it will be so in our life in heaven. And why should it not be so in the intermediate state? If we grow as we see Christ here by faith, much more shall we develop and expand in knowledge and holiness when we see Him as He is, for here we see through a glass darkly but there face to face.

My last remark is occasioned by the question that I am sure you have already asked,—What then is the purpose of that waiting life? Why should we not pass straightway at death, one by one, through resurrection and judgment and go to our final places as the case may be? What purpose can be served by the intermediate state? There are many answers that might be given. For one thing if we were to be raised and judged one by one at death, it would be impossible to have a general judgment and a general resurrection. The waiting life makes it possible that the dead shall all rise together, and the throne of judgment be set for all mankind. And it seems to me that there may be some necessity in that. God owes something to His own moral government, and in the eyes of the whole race—at the same moment—He will vindicate his government. Men will see the universe as a whole in the light of every other life that ever lived, in the light of every other age that ever existed, and in the presence of the completed whole God's great judgment will be upheld.

But let me, in a closing moment, give you the one great reason from the Scripture. It is suggested by my second text: "that they without us should not be made perfect." We shall all gather in the antechamber and go up together. That will be part of its glory and joy. We shall share it all together. I can see an earthly picture that tells me what I mean. I can see an old man and woman in their lowly home in the evening of their life. Their children are scattered here and there in the great world. They have not been together now for years. But as some Christmas season draws near, they have all agreed that they must every one meet in the dear old home. And because they cannot all arrive at the same moment,—because one's train comes at this hour and one at that they arrange some convenient gathering place—perhaps the home of some married daughter near by. And there they gather in the waiting place and when the latest train has brought the last traveller, they go up together—all together to the old home and take the old folks by surprise. And do you not think that half their joy will just be this—that they go up together—and together look at the old fireplace and the book case and the stairway up to the attic? It is the joy of fellowship. So they who have gone before shall not be made perfect without us. It is only with all the saints that we are "able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." "And they shall come" says Jesus, "from the east, and from the west and from the north and from the south and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God."

IV

DOES PERSONAL IDENTITY CONTINUE?

"She is not dead! the child of our affection,
But gone unto that school
Where she no longer needs our poor protection
And Christ Himself doth rule.

In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,
By guardian angels led,
Safe from temptation—safe from sin's pollution—
She lives! whom we call dead."

—LONGFELLOW.

"Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?"

—BROWNING.

IV

DOES PERSONAL IDENTITY CONTINUE?

TEXT: *"And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him."*—Matt. 17:3.

There was a period in the experience of the great Carlyle when his gloomy soul was plunged into deeper gloom through the death of a very dear relative and friend. Among the many words of comfort which reached him, at that time, perhaps the message from his friend John Lockhart was the most comforting of all. It was only a simple poem of three verses but it became very precious to the moody mind of the great philosopher, and was often heard upon his lips till the very close of his life. These were the verses:

"It is an old belief,
That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief,
Dear friends shall meet once more;

Beyond the sphere of time,
And sin, and Fate's control,

Serene in changeless prime
Of body and of soul.

That creed I fain would keep,
That hope I'll ne'er forego,
Eternal be the sleep
If not to waken so."

It is that old belief we are to think about to-night. Is there any foundation for that creed? Is there any ground for that hope? Does personal identity continue after death? Do you continue to be "you" and I continue to be "I" in the life that lies beyond? Now it may appear to some of you that these questions received their answer in the first sermon in the series. There we put the question, Is there a life beyond? a question we answered emphatically in the affirmative—science declaring that there may be a future life, philosophy declaring that there ought to be, and revelation declaring that there is. But a moment's thought will show you that we touch a deeper phase of the question to-night. One might conceive of a future life where personal identity did not survive and where you were no longer "you" and I was no longer "I." Might it not happen that personal identity could be swallowed up in the great reservoir of being with no separate and distinct existence for the individual soul? We know that such a doctrine is held in many quarters. Sometimes I think that some of our poetry and much of our imagery tend to confirm that idea in our minds. Life is commonly represented as a stream flowing down to an ocean and emptying itself into the immensity of the boundless and fathomless deep. What do we mean by that ocean? If it means that our life is moving toward a boundless expansion and a perfect rest then it is fraught with untold comfort, but if it means that we are absorbed in the impersonal expanses of being where all individuality melts away, then it is a doubtful blessing to these intense and personal souls of ours. And that, as you know, is what the Buddhist means by Nirvana. We are swallowed up in the ocean of being. To him the future existence is a boundless sea where all the streams of being are lost. To him the future is a great harmony where the individualities of being melt away in the eternal music of the spheres. It is life, but it is life that cannot be detached into separate identity. It is light, but it is light that cannot be broken up into the spectrum of individual color. A doubtful blessing indeed! I need hardly tell you that from such a future as that we find ourselves recoil. Immortality would be no boon to any of us if we had to pay its price with our individuality of soul. We cannot bear the prospect of being blotted out. Lockhart is right: "Eternal be the sleep if not to waken so." We can take no comfort in the thought

> 'That each, who seems a separate whole,
> Should move his rounds, and fusing all
> The skirts of self again, should fall
> Remerging in the general Soul."

You remember how Tennyson works that out in his "In Memoriam." He rejects the idea, and if such a thing were demanded he thinks we would seek at least

> "Upon the last and sharpest height,
> Before the spirits fade away,
> Some landing-place to clasp and say,
> 'Farewell! we lose ourselves in light.'"

But we do not lose ourselves in light and we shall not need to say farewell upon the last and sharpest height of being. There are two great reasons why we believe that our personal identity will survive.

The Nature of Personality

The first reason is found in the nature of personality itself. Let me put you a simple question. How do you account for this belief so deeply imbedded in us all that the soul stands alone, independent, separate, solitary in this vast universe of life? Well, I believe that fundamentally it begins back in this fact that God has created every one of us with a distinct individuality. Science is fond of telling us that there are no two flowers of the field alike, no two leaves of the forest exactly similar, no two stars identical. But far more startling and wonderful is the fact that no two persons are precisely alike in their nature. You are a distinct creation; there never was another being exactly like you. There never will be such another, with the identical qualities of mind and heart in the same proportion, the same passions and loves and hates, the same streams of tendency out of the past,—no, never another, though the world should continue for countless millenniums of time. Mark Antony said over the dead body of Brutus that "the elements so mixed in him, that nature might stand up and say to all the world, 'This was a man!' " But that particular mixture of the elements was never repeated and yet nature has said many a time since, "This was a man." When any great genius appears in our midst, we are accustomed to say that when God made that man He broke the mould and never made another like him. But that is true of the commonest man or woman among us. You are not made in the mould of another nor has another ever been fashioned in the mould that gave you form.

What a wonderful thing is the consciousness of that separate identity! It does not belong to the animal. It does not even belong to the babe at first. Did you ever notice that at first a baby always speaks of himself in the third person? It is always, "Baby does this"; "Baby likes that"; "Baby said the other," until the consciousness of himself emerges, and then it is "I," "I," "I," and that "I" continues. It survives every gain and loss; it survives the decay of the body; it survives every night of sleep. No momentary unconsciousness can destroy it; no surgeon's knife can kill it; no reconstruction of the brain matter can lose it; and because it is what it is and has the intuitions of immortality it has, and maintains the identity it does, we are profoundly convinced that no crisis of death can ever affect it. It will still survive in the vast life into which we go.

In the Revelation

The second reason for believing in personal immortality is found in the Scripture revelation. It would be easy to multiply the passages, but let me content myself with a few. Did you ever notice how the Old Testament writers speak of the departing? They said of Abraham that he "died in a good old age, an old man, full of years; and was gathered to his people." Isaac is gathered unto his people; Jacob is gathered unto his people; Aaron is gathered unto his fathers, which would seem to indicate that they would retain their identity among their own. When the baby boy of David died the broken-hearted father said, "I shall go to him but he shall not return to me." Or take our Lord's story of Dives and Lazarus. Lazarus recognizes himself as Lazarus;

Dives recognizes himself as Dives. They each kept on saying "I". They recognize each other; they recognize Abraham, they remember what took place upon the earth; they connect their identity there with their identity here, and Dives remembers his five brothers who are left behind. Again, we are told that in that new life we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but how could we fellowship with them unless they retain their personal individuality? Our Lord's words to the penitent thief assume the same truth, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Or take that other great passage that Christ quoted from the Old Testament. Long after Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are dead, God declares: "I am," (not I was) but "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Jesus adds in a significant word: "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." By this He implies that they are still alive as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that He has still to do with them and they have still to do with Him. Then there is this impressive passage of our text where Moses and Elias appear in the mount of transfiguration. They are recognized by Jesus. In some way they seem to have been recognized by Peter and James and John. And what shall we say of that great experience of Paul as recorded in the twelfth chapter of Second Corinthians? It is true he does not mention his own name but that is because he did not want to boast. "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for men to utter." It was a God-given visit to the sphere where the departed spirits dwell. He was conscious of his own identity, and one result of it was that ever afterward Paul had a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better. And if I must detain you another moment with this point, there is the notable instance of our Lord Himself who came back from the dead. His disciples knew Him, knew the very nail-prints in his hands and feet, knew the spear mark in His side; and when some of them seemed to be terrified, He said; "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see." Is it not a wonderful thing how this personal consciousness drives on through us all? There is no burden of the world's life that can crush it out. We still have the power to say "I" though the mighty pressure of a million personalities is concentrated upon us. We still have the power and the right to say "I" amid the mystery of death. We still feel that it is the "I" here that shall come into the fulness of the life there. So with the poet we may confidently say:

> "On high
> A record lives of thine identity!
> Thou shalt not lose one charm of lip or eye;
> The hues and liquid lights shall wait for thee,
> And the fair tissues whereso'er they be.
> So shall that beauty its old rights maintain,
> And thy sweet spirit own these eyes again."

Some Inferences that Follow

If, then, there is a survival of personal identity there are a few things that become clear.

1. It is clear that *we shall know our friends*

in the life that is beyond. There can be nothing more certain than that. When old John Evans, the Welsh preacher, was asked if we should know one another in the future life he replied: "Most certainly we shall. Do you think that we shall be greater fools in heaven than we are here?" And that reply is not flippant. It is based on common sense. We are going with all our faculties about us. We are not going away into a mist of vague fancies where nothing is real and recognized. Well might Tennyson ask again—

> "Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
> Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside;
> And I shall know him when we meet:
>
> And we shall sit at endless feast,
> Enjoying each the other's good:
> What vaster dream can hit the mood
> Of love on earth? . . ."

But if you ask how there can be recognition among spirits, the answer is not easy. It is neither impossible nor improbable that in that other life the soul is clothed in some kind of tangible spirit form. For that belief the warrant may be found in Scripture. In the mount of transfiguration Moses and Elias appeared in some form that brought them within the bounds of recognition. But apart altogether from any visible form we know that even here upon the earth the deepest and surest recognitions are spiritual. Soul recognizes soul. Bodily features are not always the most familiar among friends. There is a freemasonry of spirit. A score of years may write their physical changes on him who left home as a boy, but they cannot hide his identity from the swift intuition of his mother's love. And where soul is knit to soul in love, death can write no changes that will hide our loved ones from our spiritual insight, cleansed and invigorated in that new life.

"When for me the silent oar
  Parts the silent river,
And I stand upon the shore
  Of the strange For Ever,
Shall I miss the loved and known?
  Shall I vainly seek mine own?

. . . . . .

Can the bonds that make us here
  Know ourselves immortal,
Drop away like foliage sere
  At life's inner portal?
What is holiest below
  Must forever live and grow."

That is it. "What is holiest here below must forever live and grow." Love never dies. The spiritual recognitions remain and we realize what Paul suggests when he says about this life of time and space and the veil of matter:

> "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: (soul to soul) now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

2. It is clear also from this teaching that *we can never get away from ourselves.* All that we have we leave behind us, and all that we are we take with us into the life beyond. Yes! all that we are. We cannot slip away from ourselves through death. Death does not alter our identity. In the naval battle between the Monitor and the Cumberland, the Cumberland sank in water so shallow that her top gallants remained above the waves. A man was in her cabin when she went down. It was the captain and he was so absorbed in his attention on the wounded that he almost lost his life. But as the vessel sank he dived through the cabin door and keeping in view the light that streamed from above, he swam up through the hatch-way and escaped out of the wreck. And somehow we imagine that

"when we go down in the sea of death we shall in some way escape out of ourselves, swim away from our personalities and leave the old ship at the bottom of the sea. Ah, if the 'I' only meant the body, that would be true. But how can the captain swim away from the captain or the ship swim away from the ship?" I cannot shake myself off like that, and it was about just that thing—the inescapability from our own personalities in the next life—that John was speaking of when he said; "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Let us see to it that these selves of ours are made pure and holy and amiable and beautiful for we must live with ourselves a long, long time.

3. And then, lastly, it is clear from this teaching that *every individual soul is of infinite value to God.* Do you not find that the deeper you look into the whole scheme of creation and redemption the more you see that it revolves around the individual soul? The world was made for the race, you say. Yes, but the individual soul was not forgotten.

The cross was raised for all mankind. Yes, but the cross can only reach mankind through the individual soul. The church aims at universal redemption. Yes, but she must reclaim men one by one. Every personality is sacred. Every identity is supremely precious. What is the purpose of a world slowly built up through the thousands of ages? It is just a platform for this personal identity, this "I" to grow on and develop. What is the meaning of this incarnation and death of the Everlasting Son of the Father? It is just a supreme effort on the part of God to redeem this personal identity, this wonderful "I." And what do you suppose is the meaning of this Holy Spirit who is here impinging his power upon our hearts? It is the touch of the Infinite "I" who is yonder, with the immortal "I" who is here. And why is there the perpetual intercession of Jesus, calling us each by name? Why are these mansions prepared, and these heavens vaulted, and these prospects opened, and these fellowships assured? It is to provide a stage for the growth of that mysterious and precious and deathless "I."

And is this the soul that you would cast away to-night? Will you hold that immortal spirit so cheap that you can barter it away for a moment's pleasure or a miser's gain? Oh, what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!"

Yes, it was for you He died. It is for you He pleads. It was for you to-night that He opened the doors of heaven. It was for you that His chariot swept down into our midst, and it is from you to-night He awaits the reply. Lord, thou hast many hearts, here is mine. Thou hast many thrones, mount mine. For

"Just as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidds't me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

V

DO THE DEAD SERVE US?

"When our beloved rise
To gird them for the ford, and pass
From wilderness to springing grass,
From barren waste to living green:
We weep that they no more are seen,
And that the river flows between.

"Ah! could we follow where they go,
And pierce the holy shade they find,
One grief were ours—to stay behind!
Our hope—to join the blest unseen,
To plant our steps where theirs have been,
And find no river flows between."

"Could I but win thee for one hour from off that starry shore,
The hunger of my heart were stilled, for Death had told thee more
Than the melancholy world doth know, things deeper than all lore."

V

DO THE DEAD SERVE US?

Text: *"But ye are come unto mount Sion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."*—Heb. 12:22-23.

This is one of those majestic and sweeping passages of the New Testament in which we are lifted above everything that belongs to time and place and made to feel the oneness of the life that now is and that which is to come. It is a great conception, this contact of two worlds, and it is one that springs supremely in its purity from the hope of the Gospel. It was not Marie Corelli who first discovered the "Romance of Two Worlds," nor Frederick W. H. Myers who suggested their communion, nor Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who first declared that death does not rob us of the ones who go before. For long before the scientist or the novelist took this for his theme, there stood out upon the pages of the New Testament this clear truth at least, that the redeemed of all ages are bound together in one great fellowship that sweeps within its circle the church that is above and the church that is below.

I am sure we shall feel the grandeur and the value of that truth all the more if we can put ourselves for a moment into the places of those people to whom the text refers. They were men and women who had lived under the shadow of Sinai and its law. It was an atmosphere of loneliness and dread. They were excluded from men and separated from God. Their brotherhood was the brotherhood of the Jewish people, and their fellowship the fellowship of their own tribes; their congregation was the congregation of the temple, and their service the service of their race. There was no breadth and outlook, no world vision and sympathy; their life was "cribbed and cabined and confined."

Well, that was the old Judaistic life but now, in this new hope of the Gospel, old things were passed away and behold all things had become new. The curtains are lifted; the veil is parted; the horizons fall back. They realize that they belong not to the brotherhood of the Jews alone but to the brotherhood of the redeemed. They have been brought into a high fraternity that lists its membership in both worlds—a fraternity that includes God the judge of all, and Jesus the mediator of all, and the angels, and the redeemed who are above, and the redeemed who are below. It is the communion of saints, and that idea is emphasized by the tense of the verbs in our text;—"Ye are come"—not ye shall come, nor ye have come—but ye are come now "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, in among the innumerable company of angels, into the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." It is the holy communion of the living and the dead. It is a conception that runs through the texture of the New

Testament. We are all bound together in one fellowship—those who are here and those who are there. Paul speaks of "the whole family in heaven and on earth." Jesus prays "that they may all be one." There is no division.

> "One flock we dwell in Him,
> The church above, beneath;
> Though now divided by the stream,
> The narrow stream of death."

If, then, there is this united family—if there is this union between the church below and the church above, you will see how quickly and how thickly the questions rise that call for some kind of answer. What is the nature of that union? Is there any medium of communication? Do they know our present life upon the earth? Can there be any conscious comradeship between the living and the dead? Do they serve us? Can we serve them? Can there be love and prayer and sympathy between us on these two sides of the grave, as there is between friends on the two sides of the world? Let us find out what light we can upon these questions.

THE NEARNESS OF THE DEAD

The first truth that emerges is this, that those who pass the gates of death do not return. I do not mean to say that their spirits do not range this life and press near to our spirits, but I do mean to say that they do not reveal themselves in any way that the physical senses are able to apprehend. We may be conscious of their nearness through the spiritual sense, but we do not see them with our eyes, nor hear them with our ears, nor touch them with our hands. I am not forgetting those unusual cases in the days of our Lord's flesh when the dead were raised, but these must be regarded as the special signs of His power that the world might know that He was the Son of God. But apart from these, no others have come back. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the appeal is made that Lazarus should be sent back as a witness of the other world, but the request is firmly and tenderly refused. Two and only two are represented as coming back to be seen of men—Moses and Elias at the transfiguration—but these two men had a special function in connection with the earthly mission of our Lord. Milton says that

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen,
> Both when we wake, and when we sleep."

I firmly believe that this is true, but they walk unseen and walk unknown; they give no sign by which these mortal senses can recognize their coming and their going in that great world of light.

Let me suggest what I mean by an illustration from the world of nature. I know the weakness of an illustration from the natural to reveal the supernatural, but Margaret Gatty in her "Parables of Nature" has one she calls "Not lost but gone before." Not only does it enshrine a great spiritual truth, but it hints at the reason why the dead do not appear, and why they make no sign. It is the story of the dragonfly. At first, as you are aware, it is a grub living in the slime of the pool, but the day draws near when its transformation is to occur. It feels within it the call to that upper world of air and light. It begins to slough off its coarse and ugly covering. It selects the reed upon which it shall climb from the bottom of the pool. Its friends gather round the grub that is to find its liberty and beg from it the promise, as human friends have begged their loved ones, that when it has explored the world above, it will return and tell its story. If the grub does not return, they will conclude that the upper world is a land of silence and death. The grub climbs up the reed, reaches the air, and bursts into the glory of a brilliant dragonfly. As Dr. Theodore H. Rand put it in his poem, it becomes a

> "Winged wonder of motion,
> In splendour of sheen,
> Cruising the shining blue waters all day."

It has not forgotten its companions below. It longs to return to them. It finds the reed up which it climbed, but this warm body and these delicate wings draw back from the water. That is no longer now its native element. No, its native element is the air, the light, the sun, and there is no passing back into the world from which it came.

> "I am yearning to break
> To my fellows below
> The secret of ages hoar;
> In the quick, flashing light
> I dart up and down,

Forth and back everywhere,
But the waters are sealed
Like a pavement of glass,
Sealed that I may not pass.

O for waters of air
Or the wing of an eagle's might
To cleave a pathway below.

. . . . . .

And the dragonfly in splendour,
Cruises ever o'er the lake,
Holding in his heart a secret,
Which in vain he seeks to break."

Have we not here the true parable of those who have gone into the unseen world? Those who die are not lost. They are not forgetting. They have only "gone before." But they live now in a native, spiritual element from which, even though they would, they cannot pass back again in visible form into this lower world from which they came. One and only One returned to talk to men. That was Jesus. When Moses and Elias appeared on the mount of transfiguration, there is no record that they communicated with the disciples. It is distinctly stated by all the synoptic writers that they talked *with Jesus*. But He returned and talked with men, and in His return and in His conversation He brought life and immortality out into the open.

Surely we have here the answer to all those foolish devices which are foisted off upon the credulity of superstitious minds. When we remember this unchanging custom that the dead do not come back in any sign that declares itself to our senses, it seems to me that all these supposed mutterings and jabberings of spirits, their rapping upon tables, and all such kindred nonsense must go into the limbo of those superstitions which are long since exploded for all self-respecting minds. No, they do not return in any visible form. Least of all do they come "to peep and jabber" their unintelligible nonsense for they are not greater fools in that world than in this; and least of all do they lend themselves to the beck and call of every mountebank and charlatan who trafficks in the world of spirits that he may gather in the gains of this world on which his heart is set.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DEAD

The second great truth made clear is that *those who pass beyond have knowledge of those they leave behind.* And if we find it difficult to believe that they are thus aware, let us begin with this simpler and easier demand that they remember their own experiences while they were here upon the earth. Dives did not forget his brethren who were left behind. Abraham bade him remember his life upon the earth. "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus his evil things, now he is comforted and thou art tormented." Would not Peter remember that look of pity and forgiveness that sent him out to weep? Would not Moses remember the wilderness and the Divine presence that never failed? Would not Paul remember the Damascus road and the vision that transformed his world? Where there is consciousness there must be memory, and memory has the power to live through passing change. But is there not every reason to believe as well that they not only remember their earthly life but they are aware of our life through all the changing years? Abraham knew about Moses and the prophets who lived a thousand years after his day. Abraham also knew, as Jesus told the Jews, all about our Saviour's mission upon the earth. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Moses and Elias knew that Jesus was to die and they appeared and talked with Him about the decease He would accomplish at Jerusalem. The writer to the Hebrews evidently believed that our departed were watching our course, for after a long list of the illustrious dead, he says; "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

I am well aware that such a belief bristles with difficulties and I do not pretend to meet them all. How can they be happy when they know our life? If they see the sorrows that scourge us; if they know of the cross we carry; if they are aware of our sins and our follies, how can they enjoy the bliss of that other life? Difficult questions, most certainly, to which no easy reply can be offered and to which no complete answer can be given here below. Some relief may be found in the consideration that, with their larger, clearer knowledge, they see our earthly vicissitudes in a new perspective, and discern what we cannot see, that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." I know that one difficult question cannot be answered by one that is more difficult, but when you question their happiness because of their knowledge, you are raising this greater question; How can God be happy whose knowledge of us is absolute and whose love for us is greater than the love of our dear, departed dead? Is not every sin a burden still upon the heart of God? Oh, my thoughtless friend! You did not think of that! You thought it was all over back there on Golgotha. No, the eternal atonement of God goes on. Take care then how you darken another Gethsemane for Christ. Take care how you crucify the Son of God afresh. In the name of Christ and of His great passion, I beseech you, do not press down the crown of thorns again upon His brow. Do not smite through again the cruel nails that hold Him to the Cross. Do not drive home again the spear to search His sacred heart. O this eternal Calvary of yesterday, to-day, and forever! God forgive us; may we not be guilty of His blood!

THE SERVICE OF THE DEAD

I come now to speak a closing moment about the service of the dead. Can they serve us, and can we serve them? We feel that their spirits are near. Have we any reason to think that they can do us any service? I am free to say that here we have no light at all from the Scriptures, and in view of their reticence, it is well to speak with great reserve. But there is much within the nature of our life and love that leads us to believe that they who are near us and who know and love (for love never dies) must still serve us in some useful way. We are assured that the angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." If angels are thus employed, why not the eager spirits of our dear ones? It must be true that the very largeness and sweetness of their love should help us to be better men and women. For my own part, I find it quite natural to say with Tennyson:

> "Be near us when we climb or fall:
> Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
> With larger other eyes than ours,
> To make allowance for us all."

John speaks in the Revelation about "the offering of the golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints"; and again three chapters later, "the angel stood to offer the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar." It is hard to say what that may mean, but surely the prayers of the saints on the altars of God are the prayers of the blessed dead, who cease not still to pray for us and serve us in the place where they can serve us best—the immediate presence of their Father, God. Can you imagine fathers and mothers and loved ones, who poured out their hearts in prayer for their children while here upon the earth, who agonized in soul for their good, who toiled for them and planned for them,—can you imagine that they would cease their service in a realm where they have the power to serve us as they never did before? I find no ground in the Scripture for belief in prayers for the dead. Our desire may follow them, and yet I am free to say that beyond that desire we cannot be more definite. We do not know enough about their state and needs to pray for them. And besides all that, there are the living who need our prayers, whose fate hangs in the balance, and especially the unblessed living who need all the energy of prayer our souls are able to command. We need not forget the dead, we need not withhold our great desire for their blessing, but let us pray for those who do remain. Pray that they may repent, that they may not sin away their day of grace, that their eyes may be opened to see the beauties of Christ. Let us serve as those who stand between the living and the dead,

> "For so the whole round earth is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

VI

WILL CHRIST RETURN?

"I like that old notion men had, of carving over doorways and writing upon lintels, mottoes and emblems, that the soul might, in entering or departing carry some eternal message with it. What if we write these three words over the lintel of our life, to give meaning to our struggle, and colour to our life—

'Till He Come'—

that the evening and the morning sun, and all the blaze of noon, and the early and the closing day may have it ever before us and others, reminding us that our work must progress, and our dreams ripen, for the footsteps of the Lord are nigh at hand?"

—L. MACLEAN WATT.

"But He turns us to the hope of His coming. We have waited for what has passed us; let us wait now for what is sure. *Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* Life can no more be weary, grey, and listless when on the border of every day lies this unimaginable glory. Let us do our quiet work as if we were preparing for kings, and watch attentively at the door, for the next comer may be the Lord Himself."

—W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

"Surely He cometh, and a thousand voices
Call to the saints and to the deaf are dumb;
Surely He cometh, and the earth rejoices,
Glad in His coming, who hath sworn, 'I come.' "

—F. W. H. MYERS.

VI

WILL CHRIST RETURN?

Text: *"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."* —Acts 1:11.

Some time ago, in one of Henry Drummond's addresses, I found a bit of verse which he quotes in reference to the second coming of Christ. It represents a Christian man in his daily life, doing his work while he carries a great expectation in his heart. It is an expectation that leads neither to idle presumption on the one hand as though his task were not worth doing, nor to feverish haste on the other as though he feared to be overtaken by surprise. Rather it is an expectation that makes him calm and strong and hopeful.

"So, I am waiting quietly every day,
When the sun shines brightly I rise and say,
'Surely it is the shining of His face';
And when a shadow falls across the window of the room
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to ask if He has come."

I do not know who wrote it or where Drummond got it, but when I set it in the light of my text, it tells me that from the days of the apostles right down until the present moment, the return of Christ has been cherished as the supreme hope of the church.

That is the first truth with which we begin to-night, that ever since the beginning in the mind of the church, the final triumph of righteousness has always been connected with the return of Jesus Christ, the Lord. I need not tell you that Christian people have differed widely about the time of His coming, the method and manner of His return and the order of His program; but there is one thing on which they are agreed, that in some way His return will mark the final triumph of His church and put the crown upon her expectation and her hope. She has fought long but in that day her long fight will be over. Every humiliation will be ended, every defeat will be changed to victory.

"Though with a scornful wonder
  Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
  By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
  Their cry goes up, 'How long?'

And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song."

And that is true. Whatever else the second advent means it means that to the church. The hopes of all the ages will be realized. The oppression of the world's scorn will be lifted. The schisms of the church will be ended. Divisions will no longer weaken her; heresies no longer distress her. Evil will no longer blemish her, for with the return of Christ the present dispensation will be wound up and everything the church has fought for and dreamed of and longed after will come to her hand in that great and notable day of the Lord.

Now, although this doctrine has always been held as the great hope of the church, it is most deplorable that it has been dragged into the realm of controversy in its relation to one particular feature of the future program. You are aware that in the Book of Revelation there is a reference to a thousand years of great triumph—the so-called millennium—and Christian people have lost their time and their tempers in a vain and hopeless argument about the relation of our Lord's coming to that thousand years. There are those who hold strongly that Christ will come before the thousand years and there are those who hold as strongly that He will not return until the thousand years are ended. And so the controversy has gathered round that. The first time I ever heard of this second coming of Christ, I did not hear of it as one of the great doctrines of Scripture, but as a bone of contention between the pre-millennialist on the one hand, and the post-millennialist on the other. I do not believe that its value depends supremely upon either view. Certainly neither view can ever be made a test of orthodoxy. And to my mind the controversy is all the more fruitless when you remember that this thousand years is mentioned only in the Book of Revelation. That is a Book that is highly figurative and symbolic. There is scarcely a picture in it which can be taken literally. Its very numbers are symbols. It is filled with threes and sevens and tens. Three is the symbol of Deity, the number of persons in the trinity. Seven is the symbol of perfection, the perfect number; ten is the symbol of kingship. Thus our thousand years may be only a symbol—a symbol of threefold kingship, ten times ten times ten—representing the Divine kingdom in its perfect and absolute supremacy. I am not contending that it is so, but I do say that the value of this truth does not depend upon the particular moment it occupies in the program of the future. It is there as a sublime fact to beckon us on, and I for one refuse to drag the doctrine into the realm of controversy where all the argument serves only to cloud the great message that is common to us all.

PROCESS AND CRISIS

Now it will help us as we approach our study to remember that there are two ways in which human history has been depicted and summed up. One way thinks of it in the terms of a process—a gradual unfolding—and the underlying idea is growth. The other conceives of it in the terms of catastrophe and the underlying idea is one of crisis. So far as the history of the kingdom is concerned, it is round those two conceptions that the two schools of thought have gathered. The watchword of the one is "process"; the watchword of the other is "crisis." Both claim the exclusive support of Scripture for their views. Both claim the authority of

Christ. Now it seems to me that a vast deal of controversy would lose its point altogether if we recognized that the authority of Christ is back of both. The history of the kingdom reveals both a process and a crisis. Process and crisis succeed one another. It is something like the waves of the sea. They gather momentum from the great deep that lies behind. They move forward with steady and irresistible power. Then the moment comes when the gathering wave breaks in a mighty crisis and spends itself upon the strand. So does the history of the kingdom reveal itself. Some great movement gathering power in a decade, a generation, a century, and then precipitating a crisis in history that rocks the foundations of society and changes the whole aspect of the world. You can see movements like that rising and crashing at last in the fall of Rome, rising and crashing at last in the Reformation, rising and crashing ultimately in the French Revolution, rising and crashing at last as in the recent great war.

It will be an easy thing for anyone who rids his mind of prejudice to see that Christ held both those viewpoints steadily in mind. Just because He is the truth, He is the whole truth, and He is the whole truth about this. Sometimes He speaks about the kingdom's progress as though it were altogether a growth. "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil—to fill out." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened." This is the language of a process. Sometimes He speaks again of the kingdom's process in language that seems altogether the language of crisis. "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars from heaven shall fall and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: . . . and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." This is the language of a crisis. Sometimes indeed you find them both in one breath, in one argument, in one parable: "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear": that is the process. "But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth forth the sickle because the harvest is come":—that is the crisis. This is the way that Jesus speaks. That is not merely true because Jesus says it; Jesus says it because it is true. It is true in life; it is true in experience; it is true in the kingdom. The process is going on; the crisis is ahead—the smaller process, the smaller crisis. But the larger process is going on and the larger crisis is ahead. He comes in the smaller process; He comes in the smaller crisis. But He comes supremely in the larger process; He comes supremely in the final crisis. There is no doubt in my mind about that. Christ is coming again, coming in a final and supreme fashion that will constitute the final and supreme crisis of history and His kingdom.

Now it is in the light of these facts we must read the words of Christ. Anyone who reads the words of Jesus can recognize a reference to several returns. First of all, He spoke of returning in the person and presence of the Holy Spirit. "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." That word was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Again, He prophesies His coming in striking fashion in the fall of Jerusalem. It was a terrible coming for the Jews. It was God's doom upon the nation which had rejected His Son. That was the coming of which He spoke to the high priest. That was the coming of which He said that "there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Again, He has returned in the great events of history, such as I have named, and in others. Julia Ward Howe was right when she wrote thus of the Civil War and the crushing of slavery in the United States:

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He has loosed the fateful lightnings of His terrible swift sword;
For God is marching on."

History is not atheistic. God is in it, and will be in it unto the end.

And the end will come, the climax, the final dénouement. As Dr. Denny says, "If we are to retain any relation to the New Testament at all we must assert the personal return of Christ as the Judge of all." As for the date, I do not know, nor does any other man, no! nor the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father. It can never be fixed in human calendars by the shrewdest reading of the signs nor the most skillful shufflings of prophecy. It does not lie within the scope of any human mind to lay the finger infallibly on that hour when the clock of God shall strike. Of two things only can we speak dogmatically: first, the certainty of the event, and second, the uncertainty of the time. Yes! the time is uncertain. I cannot believe that we are justified in asserting that the Lord is coming very soon, if by soon we mean that He will certainly come this year or next year or within our lifetime. You may hope for it, you may long for it, and labor for it. The disciples longed for it and labored for it in their day. But the hard facts are these, that "the little while" of Paul, and the "near at hand" of Peter have lengthened into nineteen centuries, and the great event—what Dr. J. M. E. Ross called "the dateless date"—has not yet been realized.

The Attitude of the Soul

And now if this is true,—the event is certain, the time is uncertain—what is the attitude we must take in reference to this solemn fact? Jesus put it all in a word. He told us we were to "Watch." "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." What did He mean by watching?

Oftentimes and by some people the emphasis is put as though it were a kind of sky-gazing that looked for the material heavens to fall; or a kind of soul-rapture that keeps them standing on their mental tip-toes and eagerly straining to discover the signs of the future. But the "watching" that Jesus wants is neither sky-gazing on the one hand nor soul-rapture on the other. Sky-gazing was rebuked at the very beginning: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" Least of all, does this watching consist in a soul-rapture that is forever in a fever of excitement and fixing the second coming as imminent. I am quite certain that this great doctrine has been brought into disrepute again and again by the attempts of some to fix the date. Ever since the Saviour went away into glory there have been those who have fixed with unfaltering assurance the date of His return. At the close of the first thousand years, there were multitudes in England who left their homes and lands, neglected their families and their work, and gave themselves up to waiting for the Lord. Many were just as certain that the end was coming in the days of Napoleon, whom they regarded as the antichrist; others just as certain in the recent war when the Kaiser was identified as "the man of sin." But surely all these prophetic calendars with their daring dates are an irreverence. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in His own power."

No! that was not what Jesus meant by "watching." If we read His parables,—like the parables of the Ten Virgins and the Talents and the Faithful Steward—we will find that what He means by "watching" is faithful and devoted service, earnest and expectant hope, and that is the only kind of watching that is worthy of the name. In every case, their watching consisted in their faithfulness to the task that was appointed them to do. A very striking illustration of the true Christian attitude is furnished in the early history of the Legislature of the State of Connecticut. On May 19th, 1780, there was a memorable "dark day" in New England. From an account of it, we take the following extract;—"A most unaccountable darkening of the whole visible heavens brought intense alarm and distress to multitudes of minds as well as dismay to the brute creation. Indeed, thousands of good people on that day became fully convinced that the end of all things terrestrial had come. Many gave up for the time their secular pursuits and gave themselves to religious devotion. Many regarded the darkness as a token of God's indignation. . . . It is related that the Legislature of Connecticut was in session at the time and that so great was the darkness the members became terrified and thought that the day of judgment had come. A motion was consequently made to adjourn. At this, a Mr. Davenport, a member of the Legislature, arose and said, 'Mr. Speaker, it is either the day of judgment, or it is not. If it is not, there is no need to adjourn. If it is, I desire to be found doing my duty. I move that candles be brought and that we proceed to business.'" We have no further knowledge of this Mr. Davenport, but his was the true interpretation of the Lord's command to watch. Here was both good sense and sound theology. Let us have no panic in our hearts. Let us go about our work quietly, patiently, gladly and diligently, so that if He comes for us to-night, He will not find us idle; and if He comes not in our lifetime, we shall go to Him with a task that is well done.

But what about you who have not yet accepted Him as your Saviour and Lord? Are you ready to meet Him? Would you welcome His coming? You may be summoned very shortly to appear before Him. For you He may come in the messenger of death. But are you ready? There are those who will be overtaken and who will not be prepared. John tells us that their panic will be so great that they will cry out and say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that great day;
O wash me in thy precious blood,
And take my sins away.

VII

WITH WHAT BODY DO THEY COME?

"Thou who hast made my house of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay;
O Love Divine, O Helper ever present,
Be thou my strength and stay."

—WHITTIER.

"The future quickening of the mortal body is the consequence of the present quickening of the living spirit. This is one of the chief notes in St. Paul's doctrine—this vital relation of the present gift of life to the future resurrection; the principle that the former is the pledge of the latter, and that the latter is implied in the former; the principle that the life which we now live is a life hid with Christ in God, a life for the whole man, which must triumph over everything opposed to life, whether in the spiritual being of man or in the physical nature through which that being acts."

—SALMOND.

"O Father! grant Thy love divine,
To make these mystic temples Thine!
When wasting age and wearying strife
Have sapped the leaning walls of life,
When darkness gathers over all,
And the last tottering pillars fall,
Take the poor dust Thy mercy warms,
And mould it into heavenly forms!"

—O. W. HOLMES.

VII

WITH WHAT BODY DO THEY COME?

TEXT: *"But some man will say; How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"*—1 Cor. 15:35.

Of all the revelations brought by the Gospel of Jesus into the world, the newest and most arresting was the doctrine of the resurrection. In the days of Paul it was supposed that everything original in the world of thought took its rise in Athens. It was difficult for any man to bring the story of anything new among the Greeks. But Paul had that great distinction. He brought to Athens the doctrine of the bodily resurrection. If he had spoken to them about the immortality of the soul, they would not have wondered for that sublime doctrine was taught by their own philosophers and poets. But when Paul stood on Mars Hill in the learned assembly of the

Areopagus and declared that the bodies of the dead should rise again, that the flesh which had become the dwelling place for worms would start to life once more, he created a sensation throughout the city, and there were some who were indifferent, some who mocked, some who were interested and some who said; "We will hear thee again of this matter." For the doctrine of the resurrection is a doctrine peculiar to the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Before we pass on to deal directly with the doctrine, let me remind you how deeply such a doctrine meets the craving of the human heart. We shrink from the thought of life without a body. Even although the soul is the gem within the casket, we are not altogether careless about the casket in which it is encased. When Joseph Parker was asked if he believed in the resurrection of the body, he replied; "Body! what do I care about my body? Let the worms have it, if they will, or the devil! Christ has my soul and that's enough for me." But that is not the normal experience. Life has a sense of incompleteness without the body. There is an inner and an outer man and both are necessary to the perfection of our life. A spirit without a body, whatever else it might be, could scarcely be regarded as a man. When God redeemed us, He redeemed us completely. It is a redemption that sweeps the whole realm of man's nature and Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians was that they might be preserved spirit, soul and body, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I am not so much concerned to-night with the proofs that men shall rise again from the dead. It seems to me that all that is put to rest when we look into the empty grave of our Lord. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." It is not the fact so much as the process that concerns the minds of men. The two questions that Paul met in his day are the two questions still to the fore: "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" How does it happen? What are the qualities and the powers of the resurrection body? These are the questions we shall attempt to answer to-night.

The Resurrection Process

When Paul undertook to answer that first question, "How are the dead raised up?" he did what his Master had often done before him, he used a parable. There are some truths too big for words; they can only be put in a picture. There are some phases of the Divine life which cannot be explained; they are miracles. The resurrection of the body is one of them. You cannot explain it; you can only glimpse it through the analogy of nature. And so Paul says; Here you have, he says, a grain of wheat or of some other grain. You plant it in the earth; it crumbles into dust; it decays and dies. It is absorbed in the soil, but out of that dead seed you get the harvest. And the seed you get back is not the identical seed you sowed but it is like it. If it was wheat, you get wheat; if barley, you get barley. You get a harvest, but the seed you cast down is gone forever and absorbed in the great laboratory of nature.

And so, says Paul, is the resurrection of the body. The body is like a seed that is sown. It decays and dies; it crumbles into dust and is absorbed in the soil. But it bears a new harvest—a new body. It is not the same body that is sown but there is some connection. It retains the identity but it is greatly changed. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

Now I am very well aware that that parable of the wheat does not fully answer all the "how" of the resurrection, but it helps us at least to get three things very clearly in our minds.

1. For one thing, we can see that such *a resurrection of the body is not utterly unreasonable and impossible.* The parable of nature tells us that. You know that one great objection raised to the resurrection of the body is this. Men say, How can this decaying dust yield a harvest? And why not? It happens in the realm of nature and why not in the realm of the spiritual? "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." And Paul is very plain as he says; "Thou fool, that which thou sowest can-

not live except it die." The only way to a new body is by the death of the old. For what happens in the resurrection is not a reanimation. Reanimation is simply the restoration of the same body to life again. But this is the raising of a new body in a new and higher form of life. "A celestial body," Paul calls it, which, though celestial, appears to have some form of material basis.

But even there, faith need find no difficulty. We are finding out to-day that matter, as we call it, is more wonderful than we imagined. Light, it is said, is a manifestation of matter. Ether waves pass through the solid walls of your house into your radio. This solid desk, from which I preach, under certain rays becomes transparent. The scientists tell us that the atoms of which matter is composed are made up of electrons, and that each electron is a complete miniature universe in itself. Who knows what mystery is hidden there? Wheat that has been lying in the hands of an Egyptian mummy for five thousand years will spring to life when planted, and in the great new street that was projected through London some years ago, out of the ancient soil that was excavated, there sprang flowers such as were never seen in England nor native to her soil. No, the resurrection of the body is neither unreasonable nor impossible.

2. Paul makes it clear in the second place that *there is no identity of particles between the new body and the old.* The seed of grain you sow you never get back again. "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be." The particles you sow perish and never return again. And so it is with the body. The new body will not be composed of the actual particles of the old body that was put within the grave. And it seems to me that this answers one of the chief objections that staggers many minds at the idea of a resurrection body. They say the resurrection of the body is absurd, for you could never find the particles of the body to call them back to life again. Here is a body, let us say, lost at sea, devoured by the monsters of the deep and passing into animal life. There is another body burned in the flames, and the very ashes scattered to the four winds of heaven. There is another which has gone into the soil and is taken up into vegetable

life. You say these particles can never be found again. There is no need to find them. The Scripture does not teach us that they are found for it is just like the seed "that which thou sowest thou sowest not that body that shall be."

3. But while there is no identity of particles, *there is an identity of character*—a continuity of life. There is some aspect in which the new will resemble the old. The identity will not be lost. There is a connection between the two. It is so in the realm of nature. God gives to every seed its own body, and the seed of wheat will bring forth wheat, the seed of corn will bring forth corn, and the seed of barley will bring forth barley. And so we shall have some relation to our former selves even in our bodies. We will not be all one row of monotonous saints undistinguishable in any way. In the case of Jesus, we know that His body retained its own identity and character. There were the wound prints in His hands and the mark of the spear in His side. And I believe that He still bears those marks upon Him, and our song is based upon the Scripture when we sing:

"Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me;
'Forgive him, Oh, forgive!' they cry,
'Nor let that ransomed sinner die.'"

It may be that our spiritual history will be written in our faces. Perhaps the martyr will wear his scars and they will not be a blemish. He will wear them as a soldier wears his medals of honor. Perhaps the men of the catacombs will wear a pallor on their brows recalling the darkness of the temple where they worshipped Christ. Even if all that is only fancy, I am certain that our identity will continue. We shall be ourselves. "One star," says Paul, "differeth from another star in glory." I am quite sure we shall know Isaiah there and the great saints of the church. We will speak with Peter and talk with Paul, and we shall know even as we are known, for the identity of personality is carried forward into the spaces of eternity.

The Resurrection Body

So much for the first question—How are the dead raised up? And now let us find out what Paul has to say in answer to the second question; "With what body do they come?" According to the Apostle, that new body is distinguished by four great qualities in contrast to the qualities of the present "earthly house" of this tabernacle.

1. First of all, *it is incorruptible.* "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." The body in which we now live is only a muddy vesture of decay. It is only a poor tent at best, with the canvas torn, the cords loosed and the tent pins pulled. It is a crumbling house with trembling walls, foundations in the dust; with many a scar, a house in which we shiver in the cold of winter and suffer in the heat of summer. When John Quincy Adams was eighty years old, he met on the streets of Boston an old friend, who shook his trembling hand and said: "Good morning, and how is John Quincy Adams to-day?" "Thank you," replied the former President, "John Quincy Adams is well, sir; quite well, I thank you. But the house in which he lives at present is becoming dilapidated. It is tottering upon its foundation. Time and the seasons have nearly destroyed it. Its roof is

pretty well worn out. Its walls are much shattered, and it trembles with every wind. The old tenement is becoming almost uninhabitable, and I think John Quincy Adams will have to move out of it soon; but he himself is quite well, sir; quite well." How easily is this body injured! How quickly is its machinery disorganized! How rapid the marks of decay! Truly, "it is sown in corruption!"

But it will not be so with that new body. "It is raised in incorruption." "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." This is a tent; that is a building. This is a tabernacle; that is a house. There is no storm that shall ever shatter that mansion. It will never weary; it will never decay. The tooth of time will leave no mark upon it; the dart of death will never pierce it through. It will never be bowed down by age; it will never be worn by weakness; it will never be touched by disease. "It is incorruptible." The spring tides of untainted youth are in it, and the energies of the eternal spheres pulse steadily within its form.

2. The *second mark of the resurrection body it is beauty.* "It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory." Did you ever look into the heart of an Easter lily and think of what it came from? It was sown in dishonor, it was raised in glory. It was sown a rough, forbidding bulb, and it was raised a matchless bloom that makes it a thing of beauty and a joy forever. So it is with the resurrection of the body. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. Of course, it is a glory that is spiritual. Do not imagine that the beauty is merely the beauty of form. The beauty of life is not the beauty of form but of spirit. It is the spirit that lights the face and oftentimes we see in faces here the foretokens of the future glory, the faint prophecy of that body which is beautiful because it is suffused and glorified by a radiant spirit within. Benjamin Franklin prepared his own epitaph: "The body of Benjamin Franklin, like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its leather and gilding, lies here, food for worms; yet the work itself shall not be lost for it will, as he believes, appear

once more in a new and more beautiful edition, corrected and amended by its author."

3. The *third quality of the resurrection body is power.* "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." We cannot guess the wonders of the powers those bodies will possess. For they will transcend the handicaps that are put upon them here. No weakness, no deformity shall they know. There will be no limitation of space for we shall pass from place to place, as Jesus did in His resurrection body by the mere volition of His will. There will be no barrier of matter for, like Jesus, we shall be able to pass through closed doors with this resurrection form. The eye will be strong enough to see through any distance. The ear will be keen enough to hear through any space. From strength to strength, the Spirit will leap onward to obey the behests of God, and upborne upon the wings of ether it shall flash its way across the shoreless sea.

4. The fourth quality of the resurrection body is that *it is spiritual.* "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." I hope you will notice that the word "spir-

itual" is not put into contrast with the word "material." It does not say "it is sown a material body"—but "it is sown a natural body." It is altogether likely that the spiritual body is material. It is not natural. The natural body means the body of the natural man—the body that fulfils all the desires of the natural, sinful life. But the spiritual body will be the body of the spiritual man, fulfilling all the desires of the spiritual life. Here we know that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." There the spiritual body will be a perfect vehicle for the ransomed soul. All that the spirit desires to do the body will fulfil and there will be no task for which the soul may prove itself equal, in which the resurrection body cannot bear it through.

Before I close, I must remind you that this is only one side of the picture. These words apply to the saints of God. These glorious promises are written for His own. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." That is a blessed promise, but it does not apply to those who have not yielded unto Christ. We are either preparing for a harvest of great glory or a harvest of great shame. We are shaping even now the body that is to be. Life is all one piece. There may be a little interruption at the point that we call death, but it is all one piece. It is in the making now. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." What are you hoping that resurrection body will be? O, my friend, there is no cheating of the harvest. The life of sin will bring the body of sin, the life of Christ the body of glory, for if you abide in Him and His life and spirit abide in you, then and then only can we claim that great promise which we pronounce so often beside the open grave: "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Into that hope may we all come, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

VIII

IS THERE A RECKONING?

"The absoluteness of moral law; the fact that men must reap what they sow, here and hereafter; the necessity of personal righteousness for the attainment of peace and happiness; the awful consequences of persistent disobedience to the best we know; the base ingratitude of turning one's back upon the divine mercy; —these ascertainable realities in the moral order are sufficient to bring out the seriousness of living, and to awaken a deep sense of personal accountability to a Moral Judge."

—CHARLES REYNOLDS BROWN.

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side,
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand and the sheep upon the right;
And the choice goes by for ever 'twixt that darkness and that light."

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

VIII

IS THERE A RECKONING?

TEXT: *"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."*—Matthew 25: 31-32.

Dr. Marcus Dods, in one of his volumes, recalls a story that comes out of the early Christian days. The story goes that a Christian man was doomed to die and on the night before his death fell asleep and dreamed of paradise. He thought he was walking in a garden of delight where everything around him was the purest most transparent glass, as clear as crystal. Even the people among whom he walked were transparent also, and he found it possible to look in upon their very hearts. But as he moved along he noticed that every eye was turned upon him and fixed upon his breast with surprise and great dismay. When he looked down to ascertain the cause of their wonder, he was horrified to see that his own life was transparent also, and it was a dark stain upon his own heart that drew the attention of the passer-by. With an instinct that seeks protection, he raised his hands to cover the stain, but his hands were transparent also and there was no shelter for his soul. In a moment he realized that the hour of judgment had come, and there sprang into his mind the words of the Scripture, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known."

That is only an old martyr's dream, but it answers to one of the deepest instincts within the human soul. There is something as deep as our own soul which says, "The day is coming when there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and nothing hidden that shall not be made known." That is an instinct among all peoples, like the instinct of immortality. They may have uttered their belief in various forms, but they all agree to this, that the hour is coming when each man will be known for what he is and shall be rewarded according to his deeds. In the old Egyptian tombs are pictures that represent the judgment of the dead. The scales are set up in the judgment hall, the soul is placed in the one, the symbol of truth is placed in the other, and the impartial scribe is standing by to watch the finger of the balance and to mark the verdict down. Plato, in his description of the judgment, represents the judge and the judged alike stripped of every appearance and disguise. The judge with naked soul discerns the naked souls of those before Him and nothing intervenes. He can trace in every naked spirit the stain of every sin. Likewise can He trace the record of every pure thought, every holy impulse and every noble deed, and, in the light of these, is able to assign to the soul its doom or its reward.

These may be only dreams and symbols: they may be crude in their setting, but they represent a truth that is tremendous. There is a latent sense of justice in every human soul. It clamors for a time when all wrongs will be righted, when retribution shall fall on every oppressor, when compensation will be made to all those innocents who have suffered; when there will be that equitable adjustment of human affairs that will vindicate the righteousness of God and establish His justice forever. That is an instinct of conscience that answers the clear word of Revelation. No one can read the pages of the New Testament without feeling how tremendously this truth is made to stand out upon the program of the future. Listen! "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "And He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained." "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened: . . . and the dead were judged . . . according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." With these words before us there can be no doubt that we are all moving forward to a last, great tribunal, when every life shall pass under the final judgment of God.

Now some may say that what we have in this chapter is only a piece of bold imagery, and is not to be taken in any literal way. I am sure we all agree that there is a great deal here to stimulate the imagination—the great white throne, the archangels, the voice like a trumpet, the massing of the multitudes—but even if you look upon that as mere drapery, there is a stern substance that stands behind it, and it is our business to grasp the essential truth and let the shadows go. And these are the essential truths;—first, the judgment is carried through by Christ; second, it is concerned with deeds and not with creeds; third, it is supremely personal.

It Is Carried Through by Christ

First of all, it appears that the Judge on that great day will be Jesus Christ Himself. It is the Son of Man who shall sit upon the throne of glory. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." We are apt to lose sight of that.

We think about Jesus as the Brother who shared our toil, tasted our temptations, died our death; the Teacher who revealed His truth, the Saviour who bore our sins; but we forget that after He has been Brother and Teacher and Saviour, He is to be the Judge of all the world. I think that is a matter of the greatest importance because men do not think of Him as the One by whom the verdict is pronounced. Many a man thinks of Jesus as the One who may snatch him from the hands of a God whom they think of as a harsh and cruel judge. But it is not so. Jesus Himself will be the Judge, and it is before Him that men shall stand or fall.

The writer to the Hebrews says that Jesus is qualified to become our great High Priest because He suffered and was tempted. For that reason also He is qualified to be our Judge. He has suffered and He has been tempted. It is the privilege in our British law that every man shall be judged by his peers. And that will be our privilege at last. We shall be judged by a Man—not by an archangel who never left the throne, nor by an angel who never trod the earth—but by a

Man who suffered and triumphed and sorrowed and died.

Thus the terrible doom of the wicked will not be the judgment-stroke of One who does not know temptation. It will be the calm decision of One who by His own experience has learned to estimate all that may extenuate or excuse. Every allowance will be made; justice will not be strained; harshness and partiality will have no place. We shall be judged by One who will look into our eyes and read our soul with His own eyes, the eyes of One who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is His love that qualifies Him to be our Judge.

"Where have you been, my brother,
For I missed you from the street?—
I have been away, for a night and a day,
On the Lord God's Judgment Seat.

And what did you find, my brother,
When your judging there was done?—
Weeds in my garden, dust in my doors,
And my roses dead in the sun.

And the lesson I brought back with me,
Like Silence from above,
That upon God's throne there is room alone
For the Lord, whose heart is love."

Do not mistake that sentiment. It will be no easy judgment. There is no tribunal so terrible as the tribunal of love. Think of one of your wisest and kindest friends and consider what it would mean to tell all your hidden sin to him, to put into words the details of it, to mark his growing amazement and pain. Such will it be to be judged by Jesus who Himself stood where you have fallen, and who can measure your fall by the most intimate knowledge of life. No, there is no tribunal so terrible as the tribunal of love. John speaks of "the wrath of the Lamb"—no anger like the anger of love; and the Book which declares that "God is love" is the same Book which states that "our God is a consuming fire."

CONCERNED WITH DEEDS AND NOT WITH CREEDS

The second truth that stands out clearly is that the judgment concerns our relation to Christ, and that relation as expressed in deeds rather than creeds. He is the pivot upon which our destiny shall turn. Of course this does not consciously apply to those who have never heard of Christ. No man can be held responsible for rejecting Jesus if he has never heard of Him. By whatever light we have had shall we be judged. Whatever light or lack of light has been the portion of the heathen, we have had the light—the full light of His Gospel on our path. We know who He is, we know what He is, we know what He has done, and in our relation to Him we stand or fall.

That is all the more apparent when you notice that the verdict passed on every life is not so much a verdict reached by gathering up evidence for and against, weighing it and reaching a judgment, but it is a verdict that results from the simple touchstone of His presence. Let me tell you what I mean. Suppose a bit of common glass is laid down beside a perfect diamond. Don't you see how the presence of the one condemns the other without any chemical analysis being made? Or suppose that a man who is ill, emaciated with disease, burning with fever, stands in the presence of a man in perfect health. It needs no doctor's examination to discover that the spirit of health is not in him. His disease is made manifest in the presence of health. It will be so when men stand in the presence of Jesus. Paul says in Corinthians, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Literally it means, "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ." There will need to be no word spoken. There will need to be no analysis made. There will need to be no review of evidence. He Himself will be the touchstone, and men will part this way and that because of what they reveal themselves to be.

That is simply the fuller exercise of the great principle which was evident when He was here upon the earth. His very presence, without a spoken word, classified men on the right hand or on the left. Around His cradle the hearts of men were revealed and sentence passed by the unconscious Babe; Herod on the one side, the shepherds on the other. When He began to teach, we are told that there was a division because of Him. On His cross again, He silently passed His judgment upon men by His very presence. And John and Peter and Mary went over to the right hand, and the Jews and Pilate and Caiaphas went over to the left.

One of our modern painters has lately put the same idea into a painting. It represents Christ's judgment of the present age. Jesus is standing bound to a pillar on the thronging street of a modern city and the crowd goes surging by. The money-maker is eager in pursuit of gold and hurries on without a glance. The scientist with test-tube and crucible in hand is busy with experiments and has no time to see. The scholar in his robes has buried his head in a learned volume and never heeds the bleeding figure that is near. The haughty woman of fashion drives on, her hard heart untouched by His appealing eyes. The fierce religionist, orthodox of the orthodox, is battling for his creed, condemning all who do not agree with him, wounding the Saviour afresh by his spirit. Thus they pass on. There is no word spoken, there is nothing but His silent presence and each one, whether he knows it or not, passes on condemned by the very presence of the stainless Christ,—all but one lowly passer-by—a girl with clear, pure eyes who stops to lift a cup of water to His lips. Well, however far the artist may have overdrawn his picture, this at least is true, it is our relation to Him that seals our destiny. Dante did not hesitate in his picture of the Last Judgment to put popes into hell, and in that at least he was right, that mere professions and garb and cowl and religious office will not justify any life at last, "for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

In relation to Him, but how is that relation revealed? By the creed we hold? No! By the profession we make? No! It is never stated in the Bible that men are condemned because they do not hold the correct view of any doctrine. No! that attitude is revealed in our deeds. It is a heart attitude, but it is proved and manifested in our deeds. It is "for the deeds done in the body" we shall be judged. That, as you know, was the basis of judgment outlined in the only detailed picture we have of the judgment—the one that came from His own lips: "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. . . . Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not.' "

The Judgment Will Be Supremely Personal

The third fact reminds us that the judgment will be personal. We are singled out. We are separate units and must stand alone. Always that is the principle of judgment. Many of you will remember how daringly and strikingly Kipling has put that in his "Tomlinson." For Tomlinson is a man who comes before the bar of God and it is only in conjunction with others that he can boast either of any sin or any virtue.

"Stand up, stand up, now, Tomlinson, and answer loud and high,
The good that ye did for the sake of men or ever ye came to die."

And Tomlinson replies:

"O, I have a friend on earth, he said, that was my priest and guide,
And well would he answer all for me if he were by my side."

But the answer comes back:

"Though we called your friend from his bed tonight, he could not speak for you,
For the race is run by one and one, and never by two and two."

Yes, every man must give an account of himself to God. We can lose ourselves in the throng here, but not there. We can evade the spirit of God here, but not there. We can link our unbelief with others, but on that day we must answer for our own—and happy will we be if we have Jesus both as our Advocate and Judge.

But I must not close without recalling the good news that comes to condemned men in the Gospel of the Son of God. We read in the Gospel of John this gracious word: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into the judgment; but is passed from death unto life." And again I read in the Romans, "There is therefore now no judgment to them which are in Christ Jesus." What does that mean? It means that a man may have the judgment all past. He may put it behind him. He may get it over now, and if to-night you will believe on Jesus Christ and commit yourself to Him as your Saviour, then for you there will be no judgment in the great beyond. Shall we give no account? Oh, yes, we shall have to give an account of our stewardship that we may receive our rewards as servants, but we shall not have to give an account of our sins. That account is settled forever the moment you believe on Jesus Christ. And so to-night I come in His name to offer you that great gift. For you, the judgment may be past to-night. Even at this moment, where you sit, if you open your heart to Him you may pass out justified in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In a very few minutes this congregation will be scattered far and wide. Oh, that I might cease speaking to the congregation and take hold of the hand of some man who would gladly escape from the condemnation of sin. I would say to that man, Listen! He can pardon, He can forgive, He can break the power of sin. He can put the judgment behind you forever. Hast thou seen the vision of righteousness, hast thou heard the music of the upper reaches of life, hast thou longed for a sense of peace and the assurance that you were right with God? Come, then, abandon yourself to Christ, trust in His righteousness. You need then have no "fearful looking for judgment" for he that believeth on Jesus Christ "shall not come into judgment but is passed out of death into life."

IX

IS THERE A SECOND CHANCE?

"Many cherish the faith that God, in the long run, will not be defeated:

'That not one life shall be destroyed
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God has made the pile complete.'

It is impossible to dogmatise. The 'larger hope,' as people term it, is only a 'hope' at the best. The thing about which Scripture leaves us in no shadow of doubt is the immense, critical, and decisive influence of this life. Upon the life we live, momentous issues hang. I do not know what may happen in the endless ages of eternity. What I do know is that it is the gentle Christ who tells us that the broad way leads to destruction; that sin entails the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched; that some go to eternal punishment and some to eternal life. 'You seem, sir,' said Mrs. Adams to Dr. Johnson, in one of his despondent hours, when the fear of death and judgment lay heavy upon him, 'to forget the merits of our Redeemer.' 'Madam,' replied Johnson, with his usual blunt honesty, 'I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said that He will set some on His right hand and some on His left.'"

—J. D. JONES.

IX

IS THERE A SECOND CHANCE?

Text: *"Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved?"*—Luke 13:23.

The question before us to-night is a question which has agitated the minds of men ever since the Gospel of Christ was first of all proclaimed. And it is not merely an academic or speculative question, as though the answer either one way or the other made no difference in our lives. It is true that there are questions which have little or no bearing on the moral life of man. It does not much matter whether you answer them in the affirmative or in the negative, or indeed whether you answer them at all. They do not affect our spiritual life. They do not affect our eternal destiny. But the quetsion of to-night is not of that kind. It is neither academic nor speculative. It is practical: exceedingly practical. It affects our moral welfare in this world; it affects our eternal destiny in the world that is to come. It is a solemn question which involves the highest interests of the soul, and consequently whatever ground we tread must be the sure and solid ground of Scripture revelation.

Now is there a second chance? Let me, first of all, remind you that the very question limits the field of our discussion. To speak of a second chance in that world implies, of course, that there has been a first chance in the world that now is. Moreover, when we speak of a second chance, it is a second chance in relation to Christ, or a chance in that world to accept the Christ we failed to receive in this. Now it is very evident that there are some people who have never had a first chance with Christ in this life upon the earth. We think, for instance, of the vast multitudes of unconscious babes dying in infancy who had no knowledge of Jesus, who were not able to discern their right hand from their left, and for whom no personal choice could ever be possible. Again, we think of the thousands who, all their lives, have been worse than babes because their minds have been clouded by idiocy or insanity so that for them an intelligent moral choice was impossible. For these there has been no chance at all. Thus we see that this is not a question that concerns them. We believe and are assured, that for all such infant minds, whether clear or clouded, there has been full provision made in the great redemptive work of Jesus Christ, our Lord. They are covered by His sacrifice. God has them in the keeping of His eternal mercy and not one of His little ones will perish. They are saved, not because they are sinless, but because the work of Christ for the race has enfolded them within its saving grace. Again, we think of the millions of the heathen who have never heard of Him. No man can surely be condemned because in heathen darkness he did not accept a Christ of whom he never heard, and of whom he never had the chance to hear. How God will deal with the heathen who have never yet had their first chance with Christ, we do not know. There is much within the New Testament to indicate that they will be judged according to the moral light they had and, in any case, we may be sure that the Judge of all the earth will certainly do right.

But these very exceptions I have named only serve to concentrate the question more supremely on ourselves. We have had our first chance. We are always having our first chance. Day by day, our first chance is with us. But we know that in many lives that chance is thrown away. So far as we can judge, multitudes continue to reject salvation. Whether they do it in blindness, or in ignorance, or in sheer wilfulness, it does not matter for the moment. The fact remains that they continue to reject the Saviour. So far as we can judge, multitudes die in their sin, impenitent till the last, venturing out into the mystery of eternity without Christ, without God, and without hope.

It is these solemn facts which have raised the question of a probation beyond death. Will not men have another chance to accept Christ? Will the impenitent have no opportunity to repent? Sometimes that question springs out of the revolt of heart and mind alike from the terribly literal and materialistic representations of hell so common in the middle ages and even later days. Sometimes it springs out of the deep perplexity of love.

Men think of the multitudes who die unsaved and they ask, May not the way, after all, be wider than we suppose? May not God have some forces of redemption all unknown to us which only produce their effects in the world that is unseen? It is a painful problem. The disciples felt the pain of it when they put the question to Jesus, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Tennyson felt the pain of it in his "In Memoriam" when he says:

> "I falter where I firmly trod,
> And, falling with my weight of cares,
> Upon the great world's altar stairs
> That slope through darkness up to God,
>
> I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
> And gather dust and chaff, and call
> To what I feel is Lord of all,
> And faintly trust the larger hope."

That is what Dean Farrar called it; "The Eternal Hope." The question is, Has it any foundation? Does it rest on Scripture? Is there a second chance?

Broadly speaking there are four solutions offered to the problem of the destiny of those who die impenitent, those who reject Christ and His salvation in this world.

THE UNIVERSALIST

The first solution is that of the universalist. He claims that all men will finally be saved. Somewhere, somehow, sometime, every human soul will eventually be saved. That belief is defended, first of all, by an appeal to the purpose of God which desires not that any man should perish, but rather that all should come unto Him and live: and that that divine purpose of love can never be defeated. The universalist quotes such words as these:—"God so loved *the world.*" "I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all men* unto me." "God was in Christ reconciling the *world* unto Himself." *"Every knee* shall bow and *every tongue* confess." But it is plainly evident that the universalist is forcing the words of Scripture to teach what they are not intended to teach. It is true that God loved the world—the whole world, and loves the whole world still, but it is equally true that all men have not responded to His love. What proof have we that they ever will? It is true that His purpose is a purpose of salvation for every soul, but it lies within the power of men to frustrate the divine purpose. They do resist it here; they do resist it now. What assurance have we that they will not continue to frustrate and defeat it in the world that is to come? Universalism presupposes the coercion of the human will by the divine will. But God never coerces the human soul which He has endowed with moral freedom and all the terrible possibilities that a moral freedom involves. No! the doctrine of the universalist may appeal to our sentiment, it may appease our conscience, but it has no solid foundation in Scripture and he who builds upon it has built his house upon the sand.

THE ANNIHILATIONIST

A second solution of the problem of the impenitent dead is offered by the annihilationist. He claims that those who believe in Christ will be saved and become immortal, but those who do not believe will simply perish at the time of death and cease to be—body, soul, spirit. They are annihilated. They are snuffed out as the candle is snuffed out in the wind. This is a doctrine that presupposes the destruction —the utter destruction of personality. I shall not spend much time on this because we discussed that very fully in one of the early sermons in the series, Does Personal Identity Survive?—a question which we answered with an emphatic affirmative. There is no ground either in philosophy or in the Scripture, either for the doctrine of annihilation on the one hand, or the doctrine of conditional immortality on the other. The Bible represents the dead as surviving in that other life, and not only surviving but consciously surviving, and not only so, but surviving with personal identity preserved, so that you will continue to be "You" and I will continue to be "I."

THE FUTURE PROBATION

The third solution offered is that those who die impenitent, and who have missed their chance in this life, will have a second chance; in other words, that there is a future probation in the next life for those who fail to benefit by the probation they have had in this. Against that view there are two arguments which to my mind are unanswerable.

First of all, there is nothing in the Scripture on which it can be built. It has no support in revelation. All the arguments which one reads in favor of it are not convincing when tested in the light of Scripture. There is a finality about the words of Jesus in this regard to which we cannot blind our eyes. "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation." He does not say that some shall rise to a future probation nor to a second chance. He does not say that they shall come forth again in order to be made good in some future age and partake of life eternal. His words go back to link it all up with their probation on the earth. He is using the past tense, "They that have done good." "They that have done evil." If that indicates anything, it indicates that this present life has determined the destiny of that future life. Paul distinctly teaches that it is "for the deeds done in the body" in this life that men shall be judged. There is no hint of further probation which shall determine the final judgment of men. The parable of Dives and Lazarus adds still further to the weight of that. Dives is reminded that there is a "great gulf fixed" which indicates a finality of opportunity so far as salvation is concerned. When he argues that if one went from the world of the dead unto his five brothers yet upon the earth, they would repent, he is told that "they have Moses and the prophets let them hear them; . . . if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. And the idea of a second chance is largely built upon that same delusion. Men imagine that death will play some magic trick, and change their nature and their outlook. They imagine that the mere experience of death will convince them in that life of that of which the Holy Spirit could not convince them in this life. There is no such assurance. "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

And that leads us to the second argument against the idea of a second chance. There is nothing in the history of the soul to encourage the hope that a future probation would be of any avail. What reason have we to hope that any future chance would be more effective than any chance which is offered here and now? Who can guarantee that the conditions of existence beyond the grave will be more favorable for salvation than those now within our reach? Paul speaks of those who judge themselves unworthy of eternal life by their rejection of Him in whom alone eternal life is found. The Scripture speaks of Ephraim joined to his idols until at last it is said, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." It is this terrible fact of the increasing fixity of character with which we are confronted. It is to these, the words of Browning apply:

"This finite life thou hast preferred,
In disbelief of God's own Word,
To Heaven and to Infinity:
Here the probation was for thee
To show thy soul the earthly mixed
With heavenly, it must choose betwixt.

. . . .

Thy choice was earth! Thou didst attest
'Twas fitter spirit should subserve
The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
Beneath spirit's play! Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirit! Glut
Thou thy sense upon the world! 'Tis thine
Forever—take it!"

It is toward that permanence of character that we carry our souls with every fresh rejection of His love. Where have we the assurance that this tendency will cease in a life that lies beyond? We have all the provisions for salvation here supplied. Who will guarantee that we shall find them yonder? Where is the promise that divine mercy obtains there, yet without His mercy we cannot be saved? Where is the promise that His word will be preached? and yet without His word is no message of hope! Where is the promise that His Holy Spirit will plead with men yonder? Yet without His spirit we cannot be renewed. The only word we have is for to-day and not to-morrow; for the here and not the hereafter. "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." "Wherefore to-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation."

"How long may men go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end, and where begin
The confines of despair?

One answer from those skies is sent,
'Ye who from God depart,
While it is called to-day, repent
And harden not your heart.'"

What is this you are asking in the second chance? Are you asking that Calvary be repeated? Are you asking that Christ shall continue to stand and stretch out His hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying soul? Are you asking that the Holy Spirit, whom you have so steadily resisted, quenched, and grieved, shall continue to plead with one who is determined not to yield? Are you asking that Jesus shall stretch Himself in agony again upon the Cross? It cannot be.

"See from His head, His hands, His feet
  Sorrow and love flow mingling down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
  Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
  That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
  Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Present Repentance

Here, then, lies the true solution of our sin problem. This is the Gospel as the apostles preached it and as we have learned it. The doctrine of the universalist, of the annihilationist, of the future probationist alike are without the solid foundation of Scripture, and he who builds upon them has built his house upon the sand. But in the doctrine of "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" we have the solid rock on which our house may stand. The voices of patriarchs and prophets, apostles and preachers, join in the trumpet summons to every soul, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near."

X

WHAT IS THE FINAL ISSUE OF EVIL?

"There may be Heaven
There must be Hell."

—BROWNING.

"Horror and doubt distract
His troubled thoughts and from the bottom stir
The Hell within him; for within him Hell
He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
One step no more than from himself can fly
By change of place; nor conscience wakes despair
That slumbered, wakes the bitter memory
Of what he was, what is, and what must be
Worse; of worse deeds worse sufferings must ensue."

—MILTON.

"Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven."

—BUNYAN.

X

WHAT IS THE FINAL ISSUE OF EVIL?

TEXT: *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."* —Matt. 25:46.

Robert Murray McCheyne will long be remembered as one of the truest and tenderest and saintliest of all the true and tender and saintly ministers which Scotland has ever produced. His mind was steeped in the sympathies of Christ. He yearned over the souls of men with unceasing prayers and frequent tears. Of all the sermons he preached, those were the tenderest in which he preached on the justice and the severity of God. On one occasion, he was met by a brother minister who asked McCheyne what his text had been on the preceding Sabbath. "This was my text," replied McCheyne, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "But," he added with a choking voice, "but I preached it with a breaking heart."

And so, my friends, we have looked together into some deep and solemn mysteries in the past few weeks, but to-night we look into the most solemn and the most terrible of all. The very words of our text cast a hush upon our hearts. They are all the more terrible because they were uttered by the gentlest lips that ever breathed the mesage of God's love to men. So to-night, we need breaking hearts that we may listen; we need a breaking heart that we may preach. We need to be steeped in the sympathies of Christ; we need the pressure of His love; we need the gentleness of His spirit, so that we may feel the flowing tides of the broken heart of God—broken in His mighty effort to save us from the power of sin and death and hell.

I am not going to stop to-night to argue the existence of a hell. Many, I know, imagine that the belief in hell is exploded but they are greatly mistaken. The belief in hell is not gone except where there is no belief in the future life at all. It is quite true, of course, that very few believe in the hell of the Middle Ages or the hell of Dante's poems or the hell of Doré's paintings, but among our greatest and safest and sanest thinkers, there is a sure belief in the future state of woe. It is impossible to believe otherwise. The whole moral constitution of the world demands it. There are some people who pretend to say, "I believe in heaven but I do not believe in hell." I am sure they have never stopped to think what a contradiction is involved in that. It is philosophically absurd for we must recognize the difference between good and evil. It is ethically absurd for in the moral world the harvests never fail and the two harvests differ like the night and day. It is biblically absurd for it contradicts the plain teaching of Jesus. Yes, philosophically, ethically, biblically, heaven and hell must stand or fall together. If there is not the one, there is not the other. Browning once said, "There may be heaven; there must be hell." He might have gone farther and said, "There must be heaven, and there must be hell," for if there be any difference between good and evil, if any distinction between right and wrong remain, if there be any moral basis at all on which the world stands, then we must believe in the issue of both; and if we believe in the good and its reward of light, we must believe also in the evil and its harvest of darkness.

No! that is not the question we confront to-night. To my mind that question has long been settled. I do not know what weight His words may have for you, but for me at least the question is not open for debate, for Jesus made it certain that there is a hell. But the question is this: What are we to understand by that awful word? What did Jesus mean when He used it? What does it involve? What does it mean for a soul to be cast into hell? There are three directions from which the answers come;—first, from the teaching of Jesus; second, from the earthly history of sin; third, from the eternal tendencies of character.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS

We turn, first of all, to the teaching of Christ. Let us get the history of this fearful word. Just behind the city of Jerusalem, under the south-west wall, there is a steep ravine that is called the Valley of Hinnom.

The Jews had a shorter name for it, and called it Ge-Hinnom or Gehenna. In the early days of Israel, long before the time of Christ, that valley was the scene of many shameful idolatries. The heathen gods were worshipped there with ceremonies of unspeakable cruelty and unmentionable lust. When the great reformation came in the days of Josiah, these idolatries were all swept away. The altars were overthrown; the images were ground to powder; the gardens were burned to the ground and the very spot was pronounced unclean forever. From that time, it became the garbage ground of the city. In the days of Jesus, it was the common scrap-heap and cesspool of Jerusalem. All the refuse of the city was dumped there. The dead bodies of animals were dragged there and allowed to rot. Sometimes as a special mark of shame, the Sanhedrin commanded the dead body of an executed criminal to be flung out into the valley of Hinnom. The jackals prowled about the vale by night, the worms fed upon the refuse and rubbish. The only attempt at sanitary protection was by fire, and the garbage heap was left burning to destroy the waste material and prevent disease. The smoke of that fiery valley ascended up by day and by night, and from the constant feeding the fires never died. Near at hand also was the wailing place of the Jews. And so in the mind of the Jew that Gehenna stood for waste and refuse. It was the final destination of everything that was useless and outcast. It was the place of deepest shame, and to lie there at last was the last awful ignominy of life. In one word—it was associated in the mind of an orthodox Jew with everything that was useless and terrible and forsaken.

Now it was upon that fearful figure that our Lord fastened when He tried to portray the future destiny of wicked men. Whenever He thought about their final state, He could not but think of the garbage heap of Gehenna. What that garbage heap was to Jerusalem, hell would be to the great universe of God.

It is a terrible picture and we may well ask what our Lord meant by it. For one thing, it is quite certain that we have no right to interpret these words in any literal way. There are no literal flames in hell. To make the words of Jesus teach that hell is a place where the bodies of the lost are burned in literal fire through millions of years, in a flame that always burns but never consumes, is to take an awful liberty with our Lord's language as well as an awful liberty with the character of God. I am quite well aware that such an idea has prevailed at times even among Christian people. But it was not from Christ we got it. We got it from the Middle Ages backed up by the great weight of Dante and Milton in their poetry, and Michael Angelo and Doré in their painting. But even if this Gehenna is only a picture, it is the picture of a great spiritual disaster. Jesus could not find any figure in life that was strong enough to describe the final issues of sin. He saw its outcome, and it made Him shudder. And when He compares it all with the garbage heap of Gehenna, what does He mean? Recall how He said once that if any man would speak angry and murderous words, he was in danger of Gehenna. He said again that it was more profitable to lose a part of your life rather than have your whole life cast into Gehenna. He warned the Pharisees and scribes against the judgment of Gehenna. He tells us that in the last judgment, those who have rejected Him will go away into Gehenna. What do you think He would have us understand by that? What do you think He meant? I think He means this;—That spiritually a man may make himself a piece of refuse in God's great world. He meant that a man might resist the divine plan until he would have to be cast out at last as a waste product in the universe of God. He meant that sin in its final issue will bring a shame that is only poorly pictured by the shame of a body flung on the garbage heap. He meant that sin in its final issue would bring a remorse that would gnaw the soul as the worm gnaws the corrupting flesh. He meant that sin in its final issue would be accompanied by mental suffering so intense that only the keen edge of fire could portray it. He meant that sin in its final issue would create a despair more fearful than the despair of the wailing Jews. It is only a picture, but it is a picture of a terrible spiritual reality and that is the reality at which Jesus is trying to hint when He declares that in sin's final issue the worm dieth not, the fire is not quenched, and there is outer darkness, and weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

THE HISTORY OF SIN

But if you imagine that these are only the pictures of a disordered mind, turn to the history of sin in human life even here upon the earth, and you will see that Jesus is not mistaken. Yes, if you want to know the reality and the nature of hell, you can see it day by day before your eyes. And here let me say that there are two senses in which my subject, as I have announced it, is altogether misleading. I have announced this subject as one of the pictures of the future life, but it does not belong to the future life alone; it belongs to this life as well, and unless we escape it here it will continue with us into the future. And the subject is misleading again. I have spoken of hell as the final issue of evil, but it is not the final issue only; it is the first issue and the second and the third and the fourth as well as the last. Sin is always producing hell. If a man goes into hell at last it is because hell has first of all gone into him.

We take our hell with us when we pass beyond. You remember in the Paradise Lost, how Satan says; "Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell." Ah, that is it—"Myself am hell." I have seen men in the depths of a remorse that was indescribable, and already those men were in hell because hell was in them. I have seen men victimized by despair, their souls eaten by a gnawing fear, their hearts burning with a flame of mental anguish, and you knew they were already tasting hell because hell was tasting them. I have seen a man scourged by the whips of conscience until physical pain would have been a luxury if it could only have relieved his mind. There is nothing so terrible as the pangs of an awakened conscience, and though the conscience may be drugged now, there will be a day when it will surely wake. Was it not a man who was in hell who wrote these words:

"I sat alone with my conscience,
In the place where Time had ceased,
And we talked of my former living,
In the land where the years increased.
And I felt I should have to answer
The questions it put to me,
And to sit alone with my conscience,
Was judgment enough for me.

For the ghosts of forgotten actions
Came floating before my sight,
And the things I thought were dead things
Were alive with a terrible might;
And the vision of all my past life
Was an awful thing to face,
As I sat alone with my conscience,
In that strange and wondrous place."

Again, when you study these glimpses of hell in the daily lives of men, another thing becomes very clear—that all this is something that men inflict upon themselves. We are set in a universe that is based on spiritual laws. Across our life they are written in letters of flame. And this is one of them: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If a man sows to the flesh, he shall of the flesh reap corruption. If a man turns his back on the sun, he must be prepared to stand in the shadow. If a man deliberately turns his back upon God, the spiritual consequences of that act can never be charged to God. It is not the wish of God that he should turn away. It is not the will of God that any should perish but rather that all should turn unto Him and live.

And I say that because men sometimes speak as though God sent the wicked to hell against their will. It is not true. God does not cast men into hell. "These shall go away." They are not driven. There is no High Sheriff of the universe to arrest them. They go their own way—the way the law of their life leads them. You remember what the Scripture says about Judas, that "he went unto his own place." "His own place"—the place he had made ready for himself, the place for which he was fitted. Many people imagine that if God would, He could take all the wicked into Heaven no matter what their state might be. But there are moral reasons why that is impossible. There are reasons in the character of God. But the greatest barrier is in the wicked man himself. It would be no kindness to put him into heaven. It would be his hell. It is not his place. Put a wicked man among the righteous and the pure, put him in the holy presence of God, and he would suffer. The wicked dislike the fellowship of good people here; they would dislike it more yonder. They shrink from the presence of God here; they would fly from it yonder. Byron, who for his years drank deeply of the cup of sin, knew what that was out of his own experience, and he knows whereof he speaks as he writes this couplet:

> "The innate torture of that deep despair
> Would make a hell of heaven."

O, let us never forget that the eternal love of God is waiting for us and whatever spiritual disaster overtakes us is of our own making. There is no need for the burning thirst of Dives either here or hereafter, for at the flowing fountain of Christ, you may stoop to-night and drink. There is no need for the gnawing worm of remorse, for the joy of Christ may be yours to-night for the asking. There is no need for your separation from God either now or in future, for "whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." It can never be God's fault if we fail. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help."

The Eternal Tendencies of Character

There is a third direction from which we get some light on this dark theme. It is revealed in the eternal tendencies of character. For character tends to permanence. What you are you tend more and more to become. What we are at twenty, we will be at forty, but more so; what we are at forty, we will be at sixty, but more so. And that is what John means in the Revelation when he reminds us that death does not change our character. What we are we will be and more pronounced than before. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

I have recalled these words because they serve to throw light upon a very difficult and solemn side of our subject—Is hell eternal? Is the punishment of the future everlasting? What is the meaning of the word on the lips of Christ? Dr. Marcus Dods, whose breadth of mind and tenderness of heart no one could question, says, "So far as I have been able to make out, He meant to convey the impression which every simple-minded and unbiased reader receives from them—that the duration of the punishment and of the blessedness spoken of were the same. The word translated 'everlasting' in the one clause is the same as that translated 'eternal' in the other. In books and periodicals which are at present popular it is commonly urged that the proper meaning of the word used by our Lord is not 'eternal' or 'everlasting,' but 'age-long' and that what is meant is that the punishment spoken of and described as 'age-long' will last through the age or dispensation which immediately succeeds this present world, but not for ever."

But Dr. Dods points out that the word "everlasting" is used by the classical and the New Testament writers, by Plato and Paul alike, to express the idea of that which is permanent for ever. "It is quite legitimate—nay, it is our duty—to seek for some door of hope for those on the left hand; but it is certainly not legitimate to break a door through the words of our Lord in this passage."

"The difficulty of believing in everlasting punishment," says Dr. Dods again, "is the difficulty of believing that a God of love would not by His love ultimately win the sinner. Undoubtedly it is right and relevant to argue from the goodness of God. . . . But the goodness of God is, unfortunately, not the only factor in human life. This world sufficiently shows that other influences are at work, and that notwithstanding God's goodness human lives may become tragic in the extreme. And unless free will is to be a name and ourselves puppets, it must be so. No one questions that if repentance is possible in the world to come, pardon is also possible. No one questions that if in the darkest place of punishment a sinner sought reconciliation with God and purity of character, he would find those blessings. The question is, Is that a possibility? Is repentance always possible? Is there or is there not such a thing as fixity of character? . . . Is there a time when man's probation closes, and when the sinner's character becomes fixed beyond possibility of alteration? Seeking for an answer to this all-important inquiry, we cannot but take into account the fact which both nature and Scripture affirm, that sin has its stages of growth, and that these are marked by increasing insensibility."

"The question is not whether God will always forgive, but whether man can always repent. Every act of sin weakens the will and lessens its powers of resistance, and if the acts become habits and the habits mould character, the will may become completely paralyzed and repentance becomes impossible."

But whatever may be the certainties or uncertainties of the future, let us thank God for the certainties of the present. It is certain that here and now He is willing and able to save; that him that cometh He will in no wise cast out; that He waits to deliver us from the hell of guilt and fear into which we may be plunged even here upon the earth. Let us thank God that the word we hear now is not the awful "Depart" but the blessed "Come"; not the voice of the Judge but the voice of the Shepherd.

I was wandering, sad and weary,
When the Saviour came unto me;
For the paths of sin were dreary,
And the world had ceased to woo me:
And I thought I heard Him say
As He came along His way:
"Wandering souls, oh, do come near Me;
My sheep should never fear Me;
I am the Shepherd true,
I am the Shepherd true!"

At first I would not hearken,
But put off till the morrow,
Till life began to darken,
And I grew sick with sorrow;

Then I thought I heard Him say,
As He came along His way:
"Wandering souls, oh, do come near Me;
My sheep should never fear Me;
I am the Shepherd true,
I am the Shepherd true!"

At last I stopped to listen—
His voice could ne'er deceive me—
I saw His kind eye glisten,
So anxious to relieve me;
Then I knew I heard Him say,
As He came along His way:
"Wandering souls, oh, do come near Me;
My sheep should never fear Me;
I am the Shepherd true,
I am the Shepherd true!"

I thought His love would weaken
As more and more He knew me,
But it burneth like a beacon,
Its light and heat go through me:
And I ever hear Him say,
As He goes along His way:
"Wandering souls, oh, do come near Me;
My sheep should never fear Me;
I am the Shepherd true,
I am the Shepherd true!"

XI

WHAT AND WHERE IS HEAVEN?

"Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate; and lo! as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them—the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them 'Enter ye into the joy of our Lord.' "

—BUNYAN.

"He lifts me to the golden doors;
The flashes come and go;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strows her light below,
And deepens on and up! the gates
Roll back, and far within
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
To make me pure of sin.
The sabbaths of Eternity
One sabbath deep and wide—
A light upon the shining sea—
The Bridegroom with his bride!"

—TENNYSON.

XI

WHAT AND WHERE IS HEAVEN?

TEXT: *"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."* —Rev. 21:2.

The closing chapters of the Revelation contain some of the most powerful imagery to be found in the Bible and they have greatly affected the Christian imagination of every age. They have furnished the saints of all the ages with the most vivid conception of the world that is unseen. Our childhood fancies of heaven are based upon this vision. The strength of our manhood is rooted in its ideas. The comforts of old age spring out of its pages. It was after the plans and specifications of this city that John Bunyan modelled his celestial city in the "Pilgrim's Progress." It has inspired much of our religious poetry, and forms the foundation of many of our favorite hymns.

> "They stand, those walls of Zion,
> All jubilant with song,
> And bright with many an angel,
> And all the martyr throng;
> The Prince is ever in them,
> The daylight is serene;
> The pastures of the blessed
> Are decked in glorious sheen."

John would not claim that this is a picture of heaven. No one can give us a photograph of heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." What John gives is only a description. What Bunyan gives is only a description. It is a description of a heavenly thing in earthly terms. John speaks of streets of gold and walls of jasper and gates of pearl. He tells of harps and crowns and songs, a river and trees and fruit. But these are not the features of the city. They are the symbols of its glory. They are not its chief attractions. Its central glory is God; its chief attraction is Christ. Its supreme beauty is spiritual. A great many questions about heaven are constantly arising in our minds. Where is it located? What is it like? What are its occupations? What is the manner of its life? Shall we know each other there? These are some of the questions that press for an answer. They are not merely academic. They are not speculative. They voice the deep longings of the soul. They witness to the everlasting hunger of these human hearts of ours, whose very hunger is the proof that life's pilgrimage does not end in the rising waters of death, for we seek a better country whose builder and maker is God.

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

Where, then, is Heaven? Where? Rather let me ask, Who? Who is heaven? For to my mind the great mistake we make in all our discussions about heaven is this—that we make it so supremely material, when in the mind of Christ it was so supremely spiritual. We think of it as something outside of ourselves and apart from our being, when in reality it is something within ourselves and a vital part of our being. We think of it as some place we are to go to, when in reality it is something we are to be. All through the thinking of men, the materialistic idea has prevailed. The savage Indian put his heaven in the Happy

Hunting Ground. The Greeks put it in the Islands of the Blest. The Norseman had a material heaven of sensual delight. And there are many Christian people whose chief conception of heaven is this—that it is a magic city suspended in mid-air, with streets of beaten gold and walls of jasper and gates of pearl; where long rows of monotonous saints sit upon stiff thrones, wearing heavy crowns, playing upon harps and singing one song for ever and ever through all the ages of eternity.

Now what is the fault with all such notions of heaven? It is this. They miss the central idea of what heaven is. They think it is something, or somewhere, when, first of all, it is somebody. They imagine that anybody could enjoy it if they could only reach it. They forget that Christ is heaven and heaven is Christ. They forget that heaven presupposes union with God. They forget that a heaven outside has no charm unless they have a heaven within. These immortal spirits of ours would find very little happiness in golden pavements and pearly gates. There have been those on earth who have had all these things and yet were never happy. External things can never guarantee eternal joys, for man does not live by gold and jasper and pearls and bread, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Yes, that gorgeous vision of the Revelation has its meaning and message, but its first, fine message is not materialistic. Its first, fine meaning is a deeper, purer and sweeter meaning than that. Hidden in every wall and stone and gate and street is the deeper message of the soul. The city is the emblem of a community, for no life is perfect without fellowship. The walls of the city indicate security and separation. The open gates suggest the sympathy and generosity of the perfect soul. The pure river clear as crystal is the emblem of the pure and flowing joy of the holy life. The white robes are the emblems of stainless purity. The crowns and palms are the emblems of victory. The gold and jasper and pearls are the emblems of spiritual wealth. The songs and harps and feasting are the emblems of abounding happiness and fervent thanksgiving for all the goodness of God.

This, then, is the central idea of heaven. It is a state. It is a condition of the heart. It is a fellowship with God. I have no doubt that heaven is a place. "I go to prepare a place for you," said Jesus. Where that place is it would be idle to speculate. There are many reasons for believing that one corner of it will be this old earth of ours—this earth in which we toiled and wept and suffered and found our precious Lord. In the great renovation that shall sweep the universe, the very earth in which we live will be purified. The curse will be lifted. The blight will be gone. Nature itself will rejoice in the redemptive ministry of Christ. And when that love of Christ shall reign supreme, when the spirit of Jesus shall occupy men's hearts, then we may know that every place into which that spirit comes will become a heaven to mankind. You ask where heaven is? and there come back to us the words of Milton; "the mind in its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." Of this we may be sure: that there is and there will be no heaven for us whose heaven does not first begin within our souls.

But let us turn to another question. What is heaven like? What kind of life is the life we enter there? Well, here it is. There is no finer description to be found anywhere than that glorious picture that John gives. "These are they which came up out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." No, there is no more glorious picture of the heavenly life than that.

It is wonderful because of the things that are not there. There is no sin there. Its last foul stain will be gone from our lives, "and there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." There will be no tears there. Twice in the Book we are told that God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no pain there. No pain of body for our resurrection bodies will be free from the touch of disease; no mental pain for all doubt will have vanished; no spiritual pain for the pangs of remorse will be fully gone. There will be no grief there for our joy will be undimmed not because it is selfishly content but because it will enter into sympathy with that yearning which is the underside of eternal love. There will be no separation there. To the Jewish mind, the sea was the symbol of separation, and that was what John meant when he said, "There shall be no more sea."

But heaven is far more wonderful because of what we shall find there. Two great factors enter into the life and experience of heaven. They are the two features in the picture of the Revelation. They are the two great features that Bunyan puts into his celestial city. They are the two factors on which our happiness is chiefly based here. The one is fellowship, the other is service, for it is in eternal love and eternal labor that life finds its perfection.

A Life of Fellowship

Every true idea of heaven makes much of the fellowship. Bunyan was a sure interpreter of Scripture and of the human heart in that respect. There is the gentle fellowship of the angels—the angels, who meet the pilgrims at the river brink and conduct them to the gates; the angels who tell them of the glories they shall see, the mighty spirits they shall meet, and the bliss they shall enjoy. There is the fellowship of the pure and beautiful—the spirits of the just made perfect. Bunyan's soul was a companionable soul. He rejoices in the great company into which he sees the pilgrims pass. He envies them their privilege. He sees Enoch and Moses and Elijah and others look down from over the celestial gates. These are the masters of life—the makers of history and, under God, the makers of the race. They come from the East and the West and the North and the South and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. There will be gathered the nobility of the saints, a fellowship in which everyone will feel at home, and where mind and soul will find their fullest expansion and their fondest delight. There is the fellowship of our own, "whom we have loved long since and lost awhile." There can be nothing more certain than that. The Bible's idea of heaven is decidedly a social idea. It is the kingdom of our Father, and a kingdom in a social unit. It is the family of God in our Father's house, and the family is a social unit. The conventional relationships of life will disappear. It is the spiritual affinities alone that will dominate. For instance, Jesus says there will be no marriage as now. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." The only marriages will be marriages of the soul. People sometimes ask if the human ties that exist on this side of death will obtain on that. The answer is that if the ties are spiritual they will abide. There are no conventional ties there. The spiritual is supreme.

But the chief fellowship there is the fellowship with God. That will be the glory of heaven. "The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land." There is a world of truth in that line of the Glory Song; "Just to be near the dear Lord I adore will through the ages be glory for me." No, it is not all the truth. But it is truth. The central glory of heaven is Christ, and I want to ask you who do not love Him and delight in Him now, how you could possibly hope to find any joy in heaven if you expected to go there to-night, when at this moment the chief joy of heaven is so distasteful to your soul.

A LIFE OF SERVICE

The second outstanding feature of the heavenly life is service. "They serve Him day and night in His temple." There are two things from which every normal soul revolts. It revolts against work that is uncongenial, and it revolts against idleness. Some of you hate your work. It is a burden to you. That is because it is uncongenial.

You are weary of it. But the work that awaits us there will be a delight to the soul. We will not weary of it. We will not weary in it. "The Master of all good workmen shall set us to work anew." We will never want to be idle. For there could be no curse more terrible than to be doomed to idleness. You will remember the good old monk of Whittier's poem. He belonged to the Brothers of Mercy. He had spent his whole life in hard toil and service for the rescue and help of others. And now he was dying. His father confessor sat beside his humble bed and tried to soothe his dying hour. He assured him that he would rest forever. He would never work again. "Thou shalt sit down clad in white robes and wear a golden crown for ever and for ever." But it brought no comfort to the dying man;

"Miserable me!
I am too poor for such great company:
The crown would be too heavy for this gray
Old head. And, God forgive me! if I say
It would be hard to sit there night and day
Like an image on the Tribune, doing nought
With these hard hands that all my life have wrought
Not for bread only but for pity's sake.—
Will death so change me

> That I shall sit among the lazy saints
> Turning a deaf ear to the sore complaints
> Of souls that suffer. . . ."

The father confessor was horrified and fled from the room, but there came in the night a voice, sweet as the voice of his mother. It was the voice of his Lord—

> "Tender and most compassionate. Never fear,
> Heaven is love, as God Himself is love;
> Thy work below shall be thy work above."

For the Master who bids us welcome will say to us "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And that brings me to my concluding note. Are you assured that such a welcome will be yours? You hope it will be, but on what assurance do you base your hope? For remember, men do not stray into the blessedness of heaven. They prepare for it. For it they are prepared. Heaven gets into them before they get into heaven. Heaven gets into them here before they get into heaven there. You are counting on a life of joy and gladness, but did you ever taste its joy and gladness here—the joy of sins forgiven. You hope to meet your loved ones gone before, your godly father and mother to whom you gave your promise, but do you trust the Christ they trusted and love the Lord they loved? There is no one of us who does not hope to enter the celestial city at last. But are you on the road? Are you on the right road? Have you forsaken the city of destruction? Have you passed through the wicket gate of repentance? Have you kneeled at the Cross and, like Pilgrim, lost your burden? It is not mine to say you can come another way. There is no other way. It is not mine to say that all will be well anyway. It is not mine to say that you can come to-morrow, for no man knows what a day nor an hour may bring forth, and "now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation."

XII

WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD?

"I have seen the buried corn,
Underground in Springtime borne,
Rise with Christ on Easter morn.

So the Christ, and so the corn,
Underground in Spring-time borne
Rise again on Easter morn."

—ROBERTSON.

"Something happened over eighteen centuries ago in Judea on the morning of the third day, which has changed the whole current and flow of history;—men's lives, their homes, the rights of children, the lot of slaves, the position of women, the whole order of society; all things human are taken into, and swept along by a new resisting movement, which still bears upon the crest of its advancing wave the hope of the world's future."

—NEWMAN SMYTH.

XII

WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD?

TEXT: *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures."*—1 Cor. 15: 3,4.

There is about these words of Paul a certain definite and precise mode of expression which brings us at once into the realm of facts. Whatever this man is dealing with, he is not dealing with fiction. He is setting down facts. He declares that Jesus died. He declares that Jesus was buried, and he declares that Jesus rose again from the dead. Always throughout the New Testament, these two facts of His death and resurrection are linked together. Paul rarely mentions the one without the other—and for two reasons. The first reason is that the one would not be complete without the other. The hope of the resurrection would be no hope at all if it were not for the sacrifice on Calvary, and the sacrifice on Calvary would have no guarantee and dynamic if it were not for the open grave of the resurrection morn. The second reason is that Paul is just as sure about the resurrection of Jesus as he is about His death. The one fact is as clearly established as the other. It is true that some have even denied the fact of His death. But there can be no doubt about that. That was made doubly sure. Pilate sent out a guard to break the legs of the victims on the cross, "but when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs." Yet to make doubly sure, they thrust a spear into His side and there came out a rush of blood and water which was the physical proof that death had already occurred. And then to make doubly sure again, they wrapped the dead body in linen and spices and laid it away in a tomb that was sealed and over which a guard was set. No, there can be no doubt about the fact that He died.

The Evidence of His Resurrection

There have been some also who have denied that Jesus ever rose again from the dead. It is not surprising to learn that this fact has been assailed, for the resurrection is the central and fundamental fact of the Christian faith. Upon that fact, however, Paul and the other apostles entertained no shadow of a doubt. Nor need we. The resurrection fact is just as clearly established as the fact of His death. I am not forgetting the several theories which have been advanced to account for the empty grave and explain the resurrection story. There is the theft theory, declaring that the disciples of Jesus stole away His body by night, buried it some secret place and then spread the report that He was risen from the dead. There is the swoon theory, declaring that Jesus did not actually die at all but simply swooned away. He was laid in the grave as a dead man, though only unconscious, but gradually revived and finally escaped and appeared again to His friends. There is the vision theory, declaring that the disciples, in their high state of excitement, imagined that they saw Jesus because they were expecting to see Him. He had not risen; it was an hallucination, a pure figment of the disciples' imagination. But these theories carry their own refutation within them. The theft theory is refuted when you remember that there was a Roman sentry on guard at the tomb, and even had the disciples desired to do so, they could not have stolen His body away. The swoon theory is refuted when you remember that there was every physical proof of death. The vision theory is refuted when you remember that so far from expecting Him to rise from the dead, that was the very thing the disciples did not expect. No, says Paul, He died, there can be no doubt about that; He was buried, there can be no dobut about that; He rose again, there can be no doubt about that. "For Christ both died and rose again," and the one is as clearly demonstrated as the other.

But that is only a small part of the evidence. In this very chapter from which the text is taken, Paul gives us a summary—it is only a mere summary—of another line of evidence. First of all, he says that the risen Christ was "seen of Peter, then of the twelve; after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles; and last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Now that is Paul's story. He has listed all his witnesses. Here are their names. They can be summoned by the court if they are required. True, some of them have died, but the vast majority are still alive and within call. And here he was himself, a living witness to the fact that Jesus was alive, for "He was seen of me also." Even that is only a small part of the evidence. There is another line of proof which, for want of a better name, I shall call the ethical. By that, I mean, that the resurrection of Jesus is proved in the moral and ethical results which have flowed from it. There is no explanation of the apostles apart from the fact of His resurrection. Something happened to these men after the death of Jesus. Here was a group of broken and defeated and dispirited men suddenly animated by a faith, a hope, a courage and a certainty that startled the world. They were changed and they assert that it was the risen Christ and their contact with Him that changed them. There is no explanation of the church of Christ apart from the fact of His resurrection. If the resurrection of Jesus was a lie, the church of Christ could never have been born. Nothing but His resurrection can ever explain its birth, its continuance, its victories. In spite of all the hatred of its foes, the follies and shortcomings of its friends, the church of Christ has gone through the dungeons and arenas of death, through the fire and water of persecution, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it.

Is it any wonder that the resurrection of Christ has been called the keystone in the archway of Christianity? That is the place that Paul assigns to it. He admits very frankly that if that keystone is destroyed, the whole structure of Christianity goes down with it. If Christ be not raised, he declares, then faith is vain, the testimony of the apostles is a falsehood, there is no justification, the pledge of the future life is a delusion, "For if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." "If it be proved," says Principal Fairbairn, "that no living Christ ever issued from the tomb of Joseph, then that tomb becomes the grave not of a man but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and all the splendid enthusiasm it has inspired."

The Meaning of the Fact

So, then, the fact remains unshaken. Christ is risen. But what does that fact mean? It was the command of the angel on the first Easter morning that the news should be quickly told to the disciples. What would news like that mean to them? What has it meant to the world? What does it mean to us?

1. In the first place, the resurrection of Jesus is the *crowning proof of our Lord's deity* and His central place in the work of redemption. It was the divine seal upon the work of Christ. In the first chapter of Romans and the fourth verse, Paul says that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power." And how will that declaration be made that He is the Son of God? Well, it might have been made at His birth, and so it was, for the angels announced that "unto you

is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The declaration might have been made by the audible voice of the Father, and so it was, for upon three notable occasions—the baptism, the transfiguration, and the coming of the Greeks—the silence of the skies was broken and the voice of God declared from heaven: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." It might have been made by the whispered voice of the Spirit within the believer's heart, and so it was, and so it is to-day, and "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." But God's supreme declaration was made in the act of resurrection. "God raised Him from the dead." How that runs like a refrain through the New Testament! He was affirmed to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. That was God's unanswerable argument to the question of our Lord's deity. That was the special seal set by God Almighty upon the work of Jesus. From that reply there can be no appeal. The God who speaks in language like that, who can answer Him? That was the great point in Peter's argument on the day of Pentecost as he addressed the representative nation in Jerusalem. "You do not believe," Peter says, "that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the appointed Messiah. You have taken Him and with wicked hands you have crucified and slain Him—a mere man, a mere malefactor. No! He is no mere man. Do you know what God did with the One you slew? He raised Him from the dead. He declared Him to be the Son of God with power—all power committed unto Him in heaven and on earth." That was God's sign of approval—His announcement to the whole world that the redemptive work of Jesus not only was done, but it was perfect, it passed muster with God, it was fully accepted by the Father.

Little wonder is it, then, that Paul regards the resurrection as the keystone of Christianity. If it goes, all goes. But the keystone is sure. The open grave is there. Yes, and within the grave, as though to demonstrate the ease and leisureliness of His victory, He takes time to fold up the napkin that was about His head and leave it in a corner of the tomb, as a token of His triumph for all who cared to see.

2. Again, the resurrection of Jesus is *the witness to a living Christ in the world to-day.* He is alive. He is living in Toronto as truly as He lived in Jerusalem, living in the twentieth century as truly as He lived in the first. That is a very significant word He utters in the Revelation: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." The timeless life is His. Ours is not a dead Christ. The open grave is the proof that He could not be holden of death.

> "Jesus lives! thy terrors now
> Can no longer, Death, appal us;
> Jesus lives! by this we know
> Thou, O Grave, canst not enthral us."

It appears to me that there is the very heart of Christianity, the very crux of our religion. For there are three Gods which the soul dreads. The first is the absent God who is outside of the world and life and cannot get into them. The second is the heedless God who may be in the world but does not care. The third is the dead God who lies in dust and ashes, who has no reality for the soul, who may be in the world but is utterly helpless in the presence of our needs. And of all the tragedies of religion, there is none like the tragedy of a dead God. Dead and buried and in His grave! And if it be true, as Matthew Arnold writes, that He is dead and

> "On His grave, with shining eyes,
> The Syrian stars look down"

then our Christian religion would be nothing but an empty husk and all our highest hope no more than a futile dream.

But the resurrection is the pledge that our worship centres not in a dead man but in a living Lord. All the power He ever possessed and more is still resident in Him. The causes He initiated will never die; He lives to sustain them. The souls that trust Him will never be forsaken; He lives to uphold them. All the spiritual forces He wielded in the days of His flesh He still lives to wield and with a mightier sway. He is alive! That is what every Easter tells us. Jesus Christ is living—living to fling the weight of His divine energy into His great cause, living to eventuate and actualize every dream of righteousness in His own bosom and every dream that His promise has inspired in our own. I repeat, that the apprehension of this truth constitutes for us the very crux of our religion. Too many of us worship a dead Christ, who is locked up in the life and customs of a dead past. Even to the most earnest and thoughtful Christians, the apprehension of a living Christ comes with the power of a revolution. It was so in the experience of Dr. Dale of Birmingham. He tells us how the discovery broke in upon him. He was writing an Easter sermon, and when half way through, the thought of the risen Lord broke in upon him as never before. " 'Christ is alive,' I said to myself, 'Alive!' and then I paused. 'Alive!' And then I paused again. 'Can this be really true? Living as really as I myself am?' I got up and walked about, repeating, 'Christ is living! Christ is living!' At first it seemed strange and hardly true, but at last it came upon me as a burst of sudden glory. Yes, Christ is living. It was to me a new discovery. Then I said, 'My people must know this.' " It is said that from that time there began the custom long continued in Carr's Lane church of singing an Easter hymn every Sunday morning to commemorate the living Christ.

3. Again, the resurrection of Jesus is *the pattern of the new life* we have in Christ and the pledge of the power by which we may live it. In the sixth chapter of Romans and the fourth verse, Paul says, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Now what does Paul mean by that? He means, I think, that the resurrection of Jesus is the pattern of our new life in Him, and the power that operates in the one is the same power that operates in the other. "Like as . . . even so." "Like as Christ was raised up . . . even so, we also should walk" in a new kind of life. His is the kind of life we should live. His is the kind of life we can live, and we can live it because He lives to enable us to live it. His risen life was a miracle. So is our new life, it is a miracle. His risen life was a reality, so real that He showed the nail-prints in His hands and feet. So is our new life in Him a reality, so real that we can invite men to take hold of it and test its reality in their daily life. His risen life was hidden and obscure. Its mighty secret was not seen by human eyes

and no mortal beheld the miracle that took place at Joseph's tomb. So also is our risen life in Christ. It belongs to the secret place. Its origins and supports alike spring from hidden sources in God, known only to him on whom the miracle has passed. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." The life in Christ is a new life—a real, miraculous, secret life—lived by the power of the risen Christ.

4. Once more, the resurrection of Jesus is *the pledge of our own resurrection* and the promise of immortal glory in Him. To quote Paul again in the eighth chapter of Romans; "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." It is in Him we find our pledge of a glorious resurrection. Linked to him, we shall partake of His glory—even the glory of His divine and quenchless life. When the Sadducees came to Jesus with questions about the resurrection, our Lord in reply reminds them that once to Moses God had declared Himself

as "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And to this Jesus added this significant comment, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Had the Sadducees stopped to consider what that name involved? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had long since passed away. In the common opinion they were dead; indeed, in the minds of the Sadducees they had ended their existence in the grave. But was it likely, Jesus seemed to argue, that the living and eternal God would name Himself after men if they merely died like beasts and, in their dying, ceased to be? God is not the God of dead men, but the God of men who are alive! The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! The very name implies that they are still in touch with Him, that He has still to do with them, that they are still His sons and He is still their God. He had joined His name to theirs in the beginning and that union could never be sundered by any such change as we call death. They must survive, for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Emily Brontë puts the same idea in a fine philosophic verse:

"Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

"There is no room for death,
Nor atom that his breath can render void,
Thou, Thou art life and breath,
And what Thou art can never be destroyed."

John says that His name is written in the foreheads of His people. That name shall never be obliterated. He will not leave His name in dead dust. "Ye shall live, and not die." "Because I live, ye shall live also."

When I am to die,
'Receive me,' Ill cry,
For Jesus has loved me,
I cannot tell why;
But this I do find,
We two are so joined,
He can't be in Heaven
And me left behind.

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